

DICTIONARY OF SYMBOLISM

Hans Biedermann

Translated by James Hulbert



Dictionary of Symbolism

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The proverbial bellwether (the sheep that leads the flock) is a castrated ram ("wether") wearing a "bell."

shepherd (Latin *pastor*) The symbolic image of the herder of sheep and lambs, caring for his flock and protecting it against enemies; the flock represents the submissive followers of a spiritual leader. The image was an obvious one to nomadic peoples, like the Jews of ancient times, in whose lives animal husbandry played a major role. The young DAVID defended his flock against the LION and the BEAR; the God of Israel was



Shepherd as worshipper, with baby lamb. Mari, Mesopotamia, ca. 1750 B.C.

referred to as the shepherd of his people [Psalm 23:1], and kings were his representatives on EARTH. Later Christ referred to himself as "the good shepherd" [John 10:11, and elsewhere], a familiar motif in Christian art, but one that also appears in non-Christian contexts (e.g., Hermes Crionborus; see



Shepherd. Etching, Ludwig Richter (1883–1884)

straight staff with a spade-like end, with which the shepherd can pick up STONES and cast them away. The insignias of the KINGS of EGYPT, the lash and the crooked SCEPTER, are modifications of the fly-flap and shepherd's staff, respectively. Communications from bishops to the members of their dioceses are called "pastoral letters," and Christian clergy are routinely called the "pastors" of their "flocks." The young JOAN OF ARC is frequently shown tending her sheep before she is summoned by the voices of ANGELS. The "pastoral romances" of the baroque period and thereafter sentimentalized the supposedly idyllic life of shepherds, written by city dwellers with no notion of its rigors.





Shepherd: The Good Shepherd. Early Christian catacomb relief, Sousse, Tunisia

ship In symbolic tradition, the vessel that transports heavenly bodies, especially the **SUN**, through the **HEAVENS** (the ship replacing the **CHARIOT**), or the dead to the other world (see **AFTERLIFE**). Neolithic drawings of ships—clearly symbolizing the voyage to the **ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED**—frequently adorn the walls of megalithic graves. Similarly, Bronze Age Swedish drawings of ships (each with a double stem suggestive of the front of a toboggan) are presumably symbolic representations of cosmic events rather than depictions of real ships. The sun boats placed in the water near the Giza pyramid stand for the ships that were believed to transport the sun across the sky every day; when this world was in darkness, the sun was understood to be illuminating the realm of the dead, making its way back to the point on the eastern horizon where it would appear on the morrow. In Christian iconography and elsewhere, ships and boats frequently symbolize voyages, including our voyage through life. “The life of this world is a raging sea which we must navigate on our

journey homeward. If we are able to withstand the sirens’ song (*Odyssey*), we will reach the harbor of eternal life” [St. Augustine]. The Church is often referred to as a ship, especially as a sort of Noah’s **ARK**, carrying the faithful to salvation: the church tower is likened to a mast and its buttresses to oars. The cross is spoken of at times as a mast, at times as the **ANCHOR** of our hope. Scenes in the New Testament by the Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee) and along the routes of the Apostle Paul’s voyages provide further connections.

In many cultures real-life ships have been thought of as having a magical life of their own, as the frequent carving of animals’



Ship: Nicholas, patron saint of seafarers. W. Auer, 1890

heads on the stems (and, later, the figure-heads) of ships suggests. For reasons of technical necessity, the ancient Egyptians built boats for Nile voyages with severely upturned bows, but depictions of such crescent-shaped vessels may also be references to the **MOON**: near the equator the lunar crescent appears less severely bowed than in higher latitudes.

Many Christian saints have ships as attributes—Brendan the Seafarer, Athanasius, Nicholas (patron saint of seamen), Peter,



Ship of the sun, with falcon-headed Horus holding ankh. Egypt

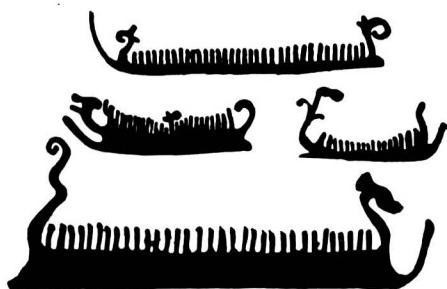


Ship: Voyage to the afterlife. Coptic grave marker, Terenuthis, Egypt, ca. 450 b.c.

Vincent, and Ursula—as does the goddess Isis, who was revered in late antiquity in many Roman provinces.

Ships are endowed with symbolic significance in ancient China as well. Hsün-tsu, for example, in the third century b.c., offered the following comparison: “The ruler is the boat, the people the water. The water carries the boat forward, but can also capsize it.”

sibyls In modern languages the word “sibylline” is applied to darkly oracular hints or pronouncements. This is a reference to the inspired women prophets of ancient Greek tradition, whose number and origin are given differently by different authors. Most often we read that there were ten sibyls. They are referred to as Chaldean or Hebrew, Persian, Delphic (a daughter of Apollo), Italic, Cimmerian, Erythrean (the sibyl who took up residence in Cumae), Cymerian (named Amaltheia or Herophile), Hellespontian (from Marpessos), Phrygian, and Tiburtian (named Albunea or Aniena) in origin.



Ships with embellished stems. Cave drawings, southern Sweden, Nordic Bronze Age

The sibyl of Cumae is referred to most frequently. She is said to have traveled from her native Asia Minor to Italy, then led Aeneas to the underworld and lived on for a thousand years. Like Pythia of Delphi, she is an oracle of Apollo. The last three of her “books” (said to treat omens, catastrophes, monsters, processions, and sacrifices) were preserved in Rome in the Capitoline temple but burned in 83 b.c. The sibyls live on in the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel.

The *Sibylline Oracles*, on the other hand, are hexameter verses composed much later (in the fifth century), Christian warnings of disasters to come.



Sickle aloft: attribute of St. Notburga. W. Auer, 1890

sickle This ancient harvest tool of prehistoric farming societies (dating from the Neolithic) was first made from flint; it later became a cult symbol, associated with the lunar crescent (see MOON). Curved swords were often called sickles (e.g., the weapon of the god Marduk, the tutelary deity of the city of BABYLON). The god Cronus used a sickle to castrate the primeval god Uranus, before he himself was struck down by his son Zeus' (JUPITER) lightning, deposed, and banished. The sickle remained the attribute of Cronus (Latin SATURN), who must be viewed as a pre-Hellenic god of fertility. His name later became confused with that of

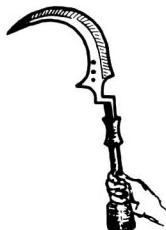


Sickle held by Priapus, god of fertility. Cartari, 1647

the personification of time (**CHRONUS**), who came to be portrayed with the sickle (or, later, the scythe) as a reminder of the unrelenting flow of time. In this sense the sickle and the scythe became established as symbols of **DEATH**.

Siegfried A legendary figure from the world of the *Song of the Nibelungs* (*Nibelungenlied*), who came to be stylized as the heroic ideal of the blond Germanic youth, especially through German romanticism (early 19th century) and Wagner's *Ring*. References to Siegfried are found outside German-speaking countries as well: the bunker system along the Western boundary of Hitler's Germany (called the "West Wall" in German) was referred to in England and the United States as the "Siegfried Line."

The hero of the Old Norse *Prose Edda* is the DRAGON-slayer Sigurd, the son of Sigmund and Hjördis. When he has killed the



Sickle-sword, insignia of the Mangbettu king Munsa. Africa, 19th century

dragon, Sigurd eats its **HEART** and is able to understand the language of **BIRDS**. He later meets the **VALKYRIE** Brynhild, seeks her **HAND** in marriage for King Gunnar, and himself marries her sister Gudrun. Still young, Sigurd is murdered in his sleep by Gunnar's half-brother Gutthorm.

In the Danish version the hero, named Sivard, rescues the proud Bryniel from the glass mountain on which she is imprisoned (the counterpart of the "flickering flame" that surrounds Brünhilde's mountain in Wagner's version, for example).

In the earliest versions widely circulated in written German, the hero is the "horned Siegfried," who bathes in a dragon's **BLOOD** to make his skin impervious to his attackers. There are old ballads in which he is said to have slain both **GIANTS** and dragons.

The fascination of the Siegfried motif seems to have been extraordinary: a young hero with features "like those of the sun itself" is treacherously betrayed and loses his life, then is avenged through the intrigues of his widow (Kriemhild, in the modern version), but at the cost of countless other lives. "Sigurd was struck down, south of the Rhine,/ And from his branch the **RAVEN** cried out:/ Atli's blade ere long will taste your blood, /And treachery seal the murderer's fate!" [The Old Song of Sigurd, 5]. (For Atli, see **ATTILA**).

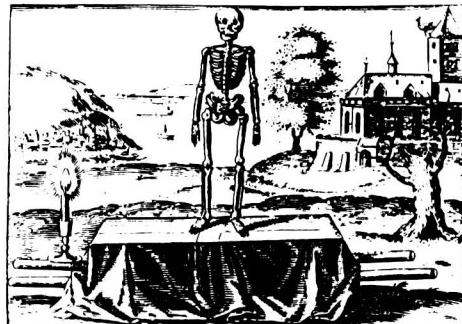
silver One of the "noble" metals, like **GOLD**; generally associated with the **MOON** itself or lunar deities, and valued somewhat less than gold ("Words are silver; silence is golden"). In ancient Mexico silver was called "the white excrement of the gods" and was also thought of as the terrestrial counterpart (or feces) of the moon god. In the writings of European alchemists the name of the moon goddess Luna is usually used for silver. Because it was somewhat cheaper than gold, silver jewelry came to be associated with middle-class prosperity; it was frequently used to make devotional objects. Silver was popularly believed to ward off demons. Priests were said to have buried silver statues along the borders of the Roman Empire to ward off barbarian invaders, whom they believed

to be demonic; when the statues were removed, Goths, Huns, and Thracians swept over the empire. Silver bullets were believed to wound or kill storm WITCHES when they were fired into dark CLOUDS.

six A NUMBER of interesting symbolic significance. The creation of the world is the "hexaemeron" (six days' labor) after which God "rested on the seventh day" [Genesis 2:2]. St. Augustine considered the number six significant because it is the sum of the first three ($1 + 2 + 3$). The six acts of corporeal mercy described in the Gospel according to Matthew [25:35–36] form one of the few symbolic series in the Christian tradition that are based on the number six. One important visual symbol incorporating the number is the HEXAGRAM, the STAR OF DAVID formed from two TRIANGLES.

In ancient China the celebrated first EMPEROR, Shi Huang-ti (ruled 221–210 b.c.), founder of the Middle Kingdom, preferred a six-based system and divided his empire into 36 military provinces, each administered by one civil and one military governor; the subsequent Han dynasty introduced a NINE-based system. The predominant conceptual system of ancient China was based on the number FIVE, but there were traditionally six parts of the body (head, torso, two arms, two legs), six emotions (anger, pain, hatred, joy, desire, love), six RIVERS, and six great kings. To the traditional five points of the Chinese "compass" (the Occidental four, plus the center) was occasionally added a sixth: the vertical axis (see ABOVE/BELOW).

skeleton In shamanistic cultures human skeletons, or scrawny human figures with highly visible bone structures, symbolize the emotional experience of disintegration undergone by initiates to the world of the trance. Similar depictions can also symbolize ascetic renunciation. Most often, however, skeletons are viewed as symbols of DEATH, since bones last beyond the decay of the flesh and under favorable conditions can be conserved for thousands of years. Depictions of the Last Judgment (see END OF THE WORLD) often show skeletons arising from their



Skeleton: "Burial" of "materia prima." Alchemist's allegory, *Musaeum Hermeticum*, 1678

graves—which, in the symbolism of ALCHEMY, promise resurrection and rebirth of "primal" or "first" matter (*materia prima*) after "blackening" (*nigredo*) and "putrefaction." Usually, however, a skeleton is a visual metaphor personifying death—holding an HOURGLASS and a scythe (or SICKLE)—serving in depictions of the DANCE OF DEATH as a reminder that "in the midst of life, we are surrounded by death" ("Media in vita in morte sumus"), an especially popular motif in periods in which epidemics (like the "black death") ravaged Western Europe.

slipper In Central Europe this traditional footwear of women is (perhaps through im-



Skeleton, representing death, comes for a fool. Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools*, 1494

plicit genital symbolism) frequently their “heraldic emblem” in male jokes and cautionary tales about the “henpecked” husband (in German, *Pantoffelheld*, “slipper hero,” who is also said to “stand under the slipper”). The sandal is said to have been the signature of the Lydian QUEEN Omphale, whom Hercules was forced to serve as a slave in woman’s clothes. There is a Hellenistic sculpture that shows Aphrodite brandishing a sandal, threatening a lecherous faun. Various explanations have been offered for the modern association of the slipper with female domination. For example, in certain regions of Austria it was customary that during the wedding ceremony each partner tried to step on the other’s foot; the loser was destined to spend the rest of his or her life under the slipper. The gesture of kissing a person’s feet as a sign of submission, e.g., the Pope’s slipper with its embroidered CROSS, is also mentioned in this context. In Lower Austria a *Pantoffelheld* is also called a “*Simandl*,” perhaps meaning “she-man”; in Krems he is immortalized by the “*Simandl Well*.” Mythic accounts of the AMAZONS and of ancient matriarchies appear to have arisen as comparable male-to-male warnings against female domination.

snail This mollusk, best known in popular speech for its slow rate of movement (a “snail’s pace”), is of symbolic importance for its harmonically formed spiral shell. Because the escargot seals itself inside its shell with a “lid” that it subsequently knocks off to re-emerge after winter or drought are past, snails came to symbolize the resurrection of Christ. The fact that they carry about their own “houses,” moreover, made them allegorical figures of self-sufficiency: the snail is the creature that has all its “belongings” with it at every moment. Hildegard of Bingen explored the medicinal properties of substances extracted from snails (their shells, powdered, were effective against worms; extracts from slugs soothed boils like similar preparations from earthworms). She used the word for TURTLES (*testudines*) to refer to snails.



Snail: “I take all my property with me.” J. Boschius, 1702

snake A symbolic animal with highly ambiguous associations. For many ancient civilizations, the snake symbolized the underworld and the realm of the dead, apparently because it spends much of its life in hiding and in pits below the surface of the earth, but also because of its apparent ability to be rejuvenated through the shedding of its skin. The snake moves effortlessly without the aid of feet, emerges from an EGG like a BIRD, and can often kill with its venomous bite.

The snake has such remarkable natural associations with life and death that it plays a significant role in most cultural traditions.

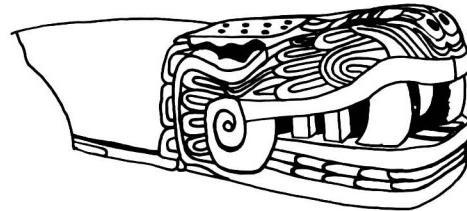
The Biblical serpent, the embodiment of Satan in the Garden of Eden, later becomes the “serpent of brass” “put upon a pole” by Moses [Numbers 21:8–9], interpreted as an archetype of Christ crucified [John 3:14–15]. Aaron’s rod was transformed into a serpent capable of devouring those of Pharaoh’s sorcerers [Exodus 7:9–12].

In Norse mythology a huge snake (Jörmungandr) is wrapped around the earth, a symbol of the sea, not unlike its ancient Egyptian counterpart, the gigantic Apophis, which threatens to capsize the boat of the sun god.

The early Christian text *Physiologus* offers curious versions of the snake's symbolic significance: because it sheds its skin, the snake is associated with rejuvenation (the Christian, too, should slough off the "old age of this world" and strive for the rejuvenation of eternal life); when the snake drinks from the SPRING it leaves its venom behind in its CAVE so as to keep the water pure (thus the Christian in pursuit of the water of eternal life must leave behind the poison of sin); snakes bite only those who are clothed, shying away from the NAKED (thus we should cast off the "fig leaf of lust" and be "naked of sin," so that evil cannot have its way with us); finally, a snake in danger protects only its head, leaving the rest of its body open to attack (thus we are to protect only our head, i.e., Christ, never denying him, but sacrificing our bodies like the martyrs).

Of particular symbolic significance is the snake biting its own tail (Greek *UROBORUS*), which stands for the cycle of eternal return, or for eternity in general. In the alchemistic tradition it is associated with cyclical processes (evaporation and condensation, alternating successively), the state of "sublimation" often being represented by WINGS.

Symbolic traditions tend to stress the negative role of the snake (e.g., the danger of its venomous bite); thus the creatures thought of as killing snakes (EAGLE, STORK, FALCON) have come to have positive associations. Older systems of myth, however, include mysterious positive aspects of the snake, often because of its associations with the

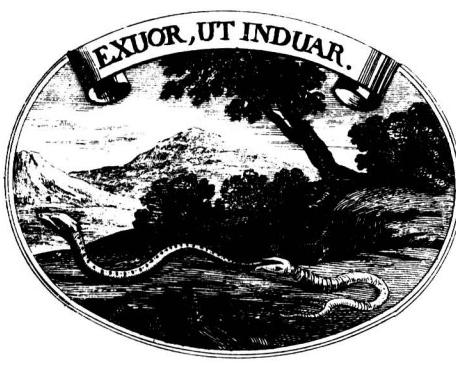


Snake: Giant stone head of plumed serpent. Main temple of Tenochtitlán (Mexico City)

earth and the underworld. A house snake, for example, can represent the blessings of departed ancestors. (Crowned, milk-fed snakes appear in many popular legends.) The snake is also associated with healing and reincarnation (e.g., the sacred snakes of ASCLEPIUS; see also CADUCEUS). For the ancient Egyptians, the snake Uraeus (the bellicose cobra) stood for the CROWN, spitting venom at the Pharaoh's enemies; it was also represented as coiled around the solar disk associated with various sun gods.

In the pre-Columbian civilizations of Central America, the snake (Aztec *coátl*) appeared as the fifth day-sign of the calendar. The snake being thought of as poor and homeless, it mostly portended ill for those born under this sign, who were expected to become peddlers and warriors, forever wandering with no fixed abode. The plumed serpent Quetzalcóatl (adorned with the green feathers of the quetzal bird), however, was a divinity of great religious significance, apparently representing a harmonization of the duality bird/snake (and thus heaven/earth). (The Mayan name of the plumed serpent was Kukulcan.) The bird/snake polarity is represented, for example, in the arms of Mexico City (in Aztec, Tenochtitlán), which show an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its claws. Throughout the world such pairings are of great significance as symbols of the union of polar opposites. [See M. Lurker, *Adler und Schlange*, 1983.]

In Goethe's prose work entitled "Fairy Tale," the snake symbolizes the spread of pure humanity. Traditionally, however, snakes are thought of as fear-inducing. Such mythic creatures as BASILISKS and DRAGONS



Snake rejuvenated by shedding its skin. Hohberg, 1647



Snake: Naga, guardian of temple gates in Hindu iconography

are exaggerated versions of the snake and its menace. In psychoanalysis snake phobia is interpreted as fear of a "phallic symbol."

In philosophic systems of Asiatic origin the kundalini snake, coiled at the base of the spinal column, symbolizes vital energy to be awakened and elevated through meditation. (See also CROCODILE.)

Snake-like creatures play an important role as "guardians of the TREASURES of the earth" in ancient Indian symbolic tradition. These benevolent demigods, called "Nagas," are often portrayed by sculptors as humans with snakes' bodies, standing guard at temples. Poisonous snakes, however, were seized by the GRIFFIN-like "golden-plumed sun bird Garuda" and destroyed, according to myth. Still, the snake was the most revered of animals after the cow and the APE, primarily because of its shedding of its skin (associated once more with renewed life) and because of its proximity to WATER, the element of life (associated with fertility). The god Vishnu rests on a world-snake; the gods and Titans rolled the body of the snake Vasuki around the world-mountain Meru when they churned the primeval "sea of MILK" into butter. The cobra goddess Ma-

nasa ruled the earth whenever Vishnu slept. Snake-like creatures came to embody the powers and aspects of various divinities.

The snake (*she*), the fifth symbol in the Chinese zodiac, is thought of as dangerously sly. A person whom we might call "two-faced" was described by the Chinese as having "the heart of a snake." On the other hand, meandering RIVERS were spoken of as snakes, and legends and fairy tales relate how grateful snakes reward their benefactors with PEARLS. Owning a snake skin was thought to assure that one would attain wealth. As in Western psychoanalysis, dreams of snakes were interpreted sexually: the snake's body represented the penis, and the triangular head the female pubic triangle. In Chinese astrology, the snake governs 1989, 2001, and every 12th succeeding year.

Rock paintings reveal that in the cultures of southeast Africa giant snakes stood for RAIN and for water in general; in addition, they are depicted as horned fantasy creatures, as in the myths of this region. In eastern Africa we also find paintings in which a great snake seems to represent the surface of the earth, its undulations suggesting peaks and valleys [H. Kolmer].

In the Shinto tradition of Japan we find a myth not unlike those of Hercules (struggle with the three-headed hydra), Perseus (see GORGONS), and St. George: the storm god Susano-o finally defeated the giant eight-headed snake Yamata-no-orochi, discovering in its tail a sacred SWORD and freeing the snake's prisoner, the princess Inadahime, whom he married. Storm winds are generally portrayed as destructive in Japanese myth (they destroyed the sacred RICE fields planted by the sun goddess Amaterasu), but they also purify, which made it possible for Susano-o to assume the role of the slayer of the great snake.

The serpent in the Garden of Eden, which led Eve to disobey God's commandment not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, is called Samael in medieval Jewish legend, a name also associated with Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness. The serpent, it is written, thinks as follows: "If I speak with the man, he will not listen, for a man is inflex-

ible. Thus I shall address the woman first, who is more susceptible. I know that she will listen to me, because a woman will listen to anyone!"

Jungian psychology views the snake (like all other reptiles) as a symbolic creature going back to the earliest ages of the earth and the human race. In Ernst Aeppli's words, the snake "inhabits an incomprehensible natural region"; it is "an image of exceptional, primordial forces. All of our experience indicates that it is a major symbol of psychic energy. When a snake appears in a dream it represents powers from the depths of the psyches of others, powers as old, we might say, as this primordial reptile itself."

In figures of speech it is usually the negative aspect of the snake that is stressed: a "snake in the grass," a "cold-hearted snake," and a "viper" are all treacherous persons. Indeed, the expression to "nurse a viper to one's bosom" (to give protection to a person of whose treachery we suspect nothing) goes back to ancient times. (Compare medieval sculptures portraying a naked woman with two snakes at her breast, representing the vices Lust and Sexual Pleasure.)

Sodom and Gomorrah In the Old Testament, the names of two Canaanite cities in the plain of the RIVER Jordan, which are said to have been destroyed as the result of divine judgment; they are also mentioned by Strabo (63 B.C.–A.D. 19) and Tacitus

(55 B.C.–A.D. 16). So far no archaeological evidence has been found to support the tradition of the two godless cities beside the Dead Sea (referred to in rabbinical literature as "the Sea of Sodom"). The Book of Genesis speaks of the moral turpitude of the citizens of Sodom, whose men wanted to rape two male visitors to the city (actually ANGELS sent by God). "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But [Lot's] wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. . . . The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" [19:24–28]. Sodom thus came to symbolize an immoral city like BABYLON. (The use of the word "sodomy" in the sense of "bestiality" seems to have no grounding in the Biblical passage.) In the Book of Deuteronomy it is written: "For [the] rock [of our enemies] is not our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah" [32:31–32].

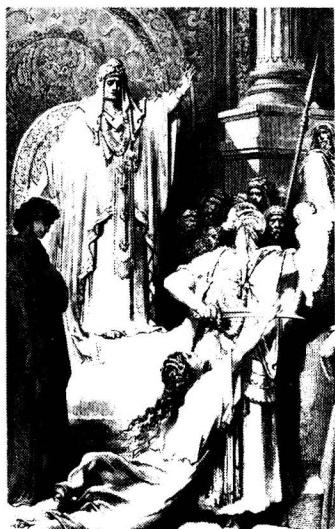
The medieval collection *Gesta Romanorum* (ca. 1300) offers a strange explanation for the moral decay of the city of Sodom: it was gluttony that "lured the people of Sodom to sin. . . . Their godlessness came from having eaten too much bread and sated themselves with it. . . . Thus let us ask the Lord that we might remain temperate on earth, so as to be invited to his table in heaven."

When Adit, Lot's wife, looked back, she was turned into a pillar of salt, which, according to Jewish legend, is still to be found at the same place: "The oxen in this region lick at it every day, until only the toes of her FEET remain, but by the next day the part they had licked away has grown back" [bin Gorion, 1980].

Solomon (in Hebrew Shelomo or Shlomo) The wise KING of Israel (961–931 B.C.), is best known today for his famous judgment determining the true mother of a disputed child ("Divide the living child in two") [I



Sodom and Gomorrah. Copy of a drawing in the Merian Bible, Strasbourg, 1625



Solomon: "Divide the living child in two" (I Kings 3).
Gustave Doré (1832–1883)

Kings 3:16–28]. He was the son of King DAVID and Bathsheba; he established peaceful relations between EGYPT and Phoenicia, undertook merchant voyages, reorganized the army, simplified the administration, and brought prosperity to his people. In intellectual history his construction of the temple in Jerusalem is of great importance; this temple is of particular importance in the legend of FREEMASONRY, in which the master builder Hiram Abif, who was murdered by three journeymen laborers, is the great martyr for his rank and for the conservation of its secret watchword. "Through Solomon's construction of the temple, God came to choose in Jerusalem his fixed abode. The holy site, previously transient with or within Jerusalem, came to rest; similarly, the Chosen People will come to rest in the Promised Land. The glory of God inhabits the temple, and it is filled with his presence. Yahweh chooses the temple as the abode of his holy name" [A. Stöger, quoted in Bauer]. In Biblical tradition Solomon is known as an author of Proverbs, part of the deuterocanonical Book of Wisdom, and, most prominently, the Song of Solomon, a collection of wedding songs full of erotic ardor, often understood as the text of a cult celebration of the *hieros gamos* (see MARRIAGE AND WED-

DINGS AS SYMBOLS) of heaven and earth, or as a celebration of conjugal love; in Church tradition, however, the text is understood as an allegory, the love of husband and wife standing for God's love for his people, Christ's love for his Church, and the mystical union of the soul with the divine prime mover.

The HEXAGRAM, or six-pointed star, came to be known as the *sigillum Salomonis* ("Solomon's seal") or *scutum Davidis* ("David's shield"), then as the Star of David.

Somnus (Latin for "sleep, dream"; Greek *Morpheus* [hence, "morphine"]]) The god of DREAMS. There is no consensus on the equating of the Latin and Greek names, since this figure is more a literary than a mythological one. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the god of dreams has a thousand sons, corresponding to the multiplicity of dream visions. In poetry the name Morpheus can refer to dream visions in human form; Icelus or Phobetor, those in animal form; and Phantasus, to any inanimate object in a dream. To be "in the arms of Morpheus" is to sleep or dream. (See also HYPNOS.)

Sophia (Greek "wisdom") A philosophical concept, associated with scholarship, mastery, skill, and devices. Complete *sophia*



Sophia as mother of Faith, Hope, and Charity. W. Auer, 1890

was attainable only by the gods; a human could only strive for it, aspiring to be a *philosophos* ("lover of wisdom")—a view that seems to originate with PYTHAGORAS. In the later doctrines of the Gnostics, the *Pistis Sophia* was revered as a person and a divinity of symbolic origin; in Christianity, as divine wisdom (*Hagia Sophia*), human wisdom being a mere symbolic reflection of the divine. Among Christian saintly legends we find that of St. Sophia (Latin *Sapientia*), the mother of (the three theological VIRTUES) Faith (*Fides*), Hope (*Spes*), and Charity (*Caritas*), who are said to have been martyred under the Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117–138).

soul-hole (German *Seelenloch*) A term for the round opening in stones used to seal prehistoric megalithic graves; presumably symbolic in significance. It has been suggested that these holes were to enable the souls of the dead (thought of as fog-like shapes) to leave their graves, watch over the living, then return; or that they served as actual entrances for practitioners of ancestor worship, who brought sacrifices to the interior of the tomb (although the openings are mostly too small for this purpose). According to a theory proposed by D. Evers of Wiesbaden, the first hypothesis is correct, and the openings were supposed to correspond to the heavenly North Pole, the point through which the AXIS MUNDI passed. Thus the grave openings also offered access to the heavens, linking the underworld, the world of the living, and the world above for those who had moved on to the AFTERLIFE. Evers



Soul-hole: Soul-hole in the entry stone of a megalithic grave. Paris basin, Neolithic



Sphinx of Greek mythology. Cartari, 1647

sees the stone graves themselves as representing the underworld.

sparks Symbolically speaking, tiny bits of actual LIGHT, floating upward from the domain of base matter into the higher realms—across the DUALITY ABOVE/BELOW. The duality spirit/matter, as it appears in Orphism, Pythagoreanism, Esselianism, and other philosophies and religions with Gnostic leanings, begins with the belief that minute bits of the divine spirit or of the ether are buried in us and that they attain the realm of light, as souls without bodies, when they have freed themselves from the "bondage of the flesh." The Chassidic mystic Rabbi Samuel Rav Shmelke of Mikulov (died 1778), formulated the duality as follows: "All souls are divine sparks. When any spark is sunk in the swamp and mire, will we not feel sorrow for it? Will we not help it to free itself, so that it can once more light up with its full brilliance? It is, after all, a part of God himself . . ." [Langer].

sphinx The Greek designation for a mythical creature with the body of a LION and a human head, known especially through the monumental sculpture at Giza (187 feet tall). Whatever fantastic hypotheses have circulated, the sphinx at Giza does not date back to the earliest ages of the earth: it is a depiction of the pharaoh Chephren (ca.



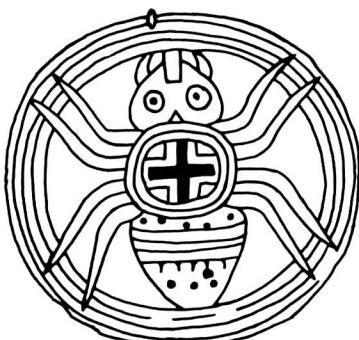
Sphinx with head of Queen Hatchepsut. Ca. 1490 B.C.

2600 B.C.), with a lion's body to symbolize his invincibility. (The "king of the beasts" was supposed to indicate the ruler's superiority to the rest of the human race.) Other KINGS of ancient Egypt (e.g., Sesostris III, Amenemhet III) were also portrayed in this form; queens were so portrayed only in rare cases.

The female sphinx of Greek tradition has its origins in a fairy tale motif. This sphinx was often winged, always female, a demon lurking at the side of the road, challenging travelers to solve her riddle and devouring all those who could not—until Oedipus succeeded in matching wits with her. She thus came to symbolize the riddle of human existence, the existential question that hu-

manity is challenged to answer. It is this sphinx with her "mysterious" smile that was a favorite subject of mannerist and baroque painters and sculptors.

spider (Greek *arachne*) In the myths of many peoples, a symbolic creature with negative associations; occasionally, a cunning "trickster," as in the often comic Ananzi tales of West Africa. Most of these traditions begin with a feeling of distance from a creature capable of spinning a web and lying in wait to paralyze FLIES and gnats and suck them dry. In Christian symbolic tradition the spider is the "evil" counterpart of the good BEE; the spider generally stands for the sinful urges that suck the BLOOD from hu-



Spider of Native American myth. Shell engraving, Mississippi Mound civilization

manity. In popular tradition, however, it can also stand for the soul: it was believed that the souls of sleeping persons could leave their bodies in the form of spiders (or, in another version, LIZARDS) and subsequently return.

"'Come into my parlor,' said the spider to the fly": most cultural traditions conserve the image of the spider as a treacherous creature never to be trusted. (See, for example, Jeremias Gotthelf's 19th-century novella "The Black Spider.") Nevertheless, in some alpine regions of Central Europe the garden spider, because of the cross on its back, is considered a good-luck symbol and a sacred creature that must not be killed. In ancient China as well, a spider is an omen



Sphinx, winged. Ivory, 2 inches high, Asia Minor, ca. 500 B.C.

of impending good fortune, e.g., the return of a "prodigal son." The spider, lowering itself on its thread, was associated with the expectation of joys descending from HEAVEN.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the goddess Athena (in other contexts a paragon of fairness) is described as furiously jealous of the Lydian princess Arachne's skill as a weaver. When Athena saw that Arachne had produced a flawless tapestry depicting the amorous adventures of the gods, one finer even than any the goddess herself could weave, she destroyed the tapestry and transformed the proud princess into the creature she most hated, a spider; filled with trepidation, the transformed Arachne crawled off into the recesses of her web. (See also SPINNING.)

spinning Frequently associated with supernatural female triads (FATES, Moirae, NORNS) who spin, gather up, and cut the threads of fate. Women's spinning in general has often been associated with the MOON, whose three major phases (full moon, first or third quarter, and new moon) suggest the three figures of Hecate (*Hecate Triformis*) [Graves]. (The weaving of the threads of fate is similarly considered to be the task of supernatural females.) Spinning and distaffs play an important role in the symbolism of FAIRY TALES, where they are likewise associated with fate and death ("Sleeping Beauty") and often



Spinning: The Three Fates with the thread of life.
Cartari, 1647



Spinning. Fairy tale illustration, Ludwig Richter (1803-1884)

with triads (Brothers Grimm, "Of Wicked Flax Spinning"). Through the moon's apparent death and resurrection, the spinning goddesses of fate are associated with the themes of the underworld and rebirth. In Christian iconography the Virgin Mary is often portrayed holding a distaff (e.g., with the archangel Gabriel in depictions of the Annunciation); this is also a reference back to Eve, who was also frequently portrayed spinning. The association of Mary and the lunar crescent is frequent throughout the centuries.

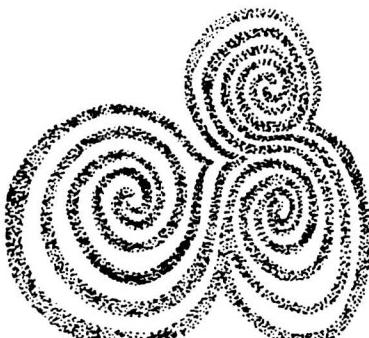
Spinning was thought of as the domain of the goddesses and priestesses in a great variety of contexts. For example, in the ancient Mayan culture of the Yucatan, Ixchel (under the aspect of the goddess Chac-chel) is a moon goddess portrayed with a weaving stool; as Ixcaneleom, she is also associated with the SPIDER.

In medieval Europe the spindle, a symbol of the contemplative life, is also an attribute of certain female saints (JOAN OF ARC, portrayed as a shepherdess; St. Margaret; St. Genevieve).

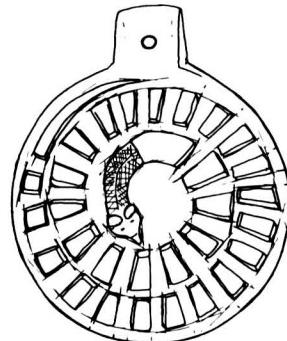
We speak idiomatically of spinning "yarns" and every other product of the imagination; here our association is not only with the spinning of thread but also with the spider's construction of its web. Even in present-day

usage, the word "distaff" is used to replace "female": e.g., the "distaff side" of a family.

spiral An ancient graphic symbol, found throughout the world, and related to the CIRCLE, especially to systems of concentric circles, which are not always distinguishable from spirals at first glance. Although there have been very different interpretations of the two symbolic forms, it is possible for hastily drawn concentric circles to become a spiral, and thus overlapping readings of the two cannot be ruled out. The spiral is fundamentally a dynamic system incorporating a movement of either rolling up ("involution") or unwinding ("evolution"), according to whether the movement is considered to proceed from the center outward or from the outside inward. The spiral, whose macrocosmic manifestation (in the winding fog of the cosmos) is invisible to the naked eye, may have first been observed in the movement of flowing water, or of any liquid descending through an opening. In any case, the spiral may have become associated with a sinking into the "waters of death" (see AFTERLIFE), as did the pattern of concentric waves generated when something breaks through the surface of a lake; this would explain the frequent occurrence of spirals on megalithic graves of prehistoric times. It is also possible, however, that these designs referred to the movement of the STARS through the night sky. It has frequently been seen that these petroglyphs are struck by rays of the SUN coming through cracks in the structure, on solstices in par-



Spiral (triple) adorning the megalithic grave "New Grange." Ireland, Bronze Age



Spiral: Coiled snake as playing board. Limestone, pre-dynastic Egypt, ca. 3500 B.C.

ticular. Since the sun also "sinks into the western sea" every evening, only to reappear the next morning in the east, the presence of these spiral drawings may also relate to notions of death and resurrection.

In cultures familiar with the potter's wheel, spirals may be grounded in the simple observation that these forms are produced by moving an object (or finger) through the damp, spinning clay. Mere "doodling" can also produce figures of this sort; there need not be any deep symbolic significance.

The double spiral is of particular interest, since it combines evolution and involution in a single unity. It is thus possible to read in the double spiral both waxing and waning, growing up and falling off, and in whichever order one chooses. It is in this double sense, perhaps, that we should interpret the double spiral in the pubic TRIANGLE of a Neolithic "mother goddess" statuette from Trace. In Romanesque sculpture double spirals are sometimes placed in the folds of Christ's garments.

In prehistoric burial structures we also find triple spirals, whose significance (beyond mere decoration) is lost to us. Similarly, the association that symbolists have proposed between spirals and LABYRINTHS remains only a hypothesis, although the notion of "a difficult path in and out again" is consonant with the symbolic tradition of death and rebirth.

springs Considered sacred places in many ancient cultures, often because of the notion

that the WATER that fertilizes the earth comes to its surface not only as RAIN from the HEAVENS but also as a gift from the subterranean divinities below. This is especially prevalent in the case of hot or warm springs, whose water has medicinal properties because of its mineral content. Naiads and other supernatural beings were revered at these sites, often within the cults of gods and goddesses of healing and purification. In the Greek, Roman (the Fontinalia festival), Celtic, and Germanic traditions it was usually female figures, often in TRIADS, who were associated with springs, and simultaneously with fertility, childbearing, and marriage. In China and Japan small shrines were often placed alongside springs. The Chinese character for "spring," *ch'üan*, can be constructed from elements meaning "pure" and "water"; it is also a cognate of the word for "origin."

The Bible refers to the FOUR RIVERS of PARADISE as flowing from a single source [Genesis 2:10–14], which becomes a symbol of rebirth and eternal life. In the Book of Revelation it has its counterpart in the "heavenly JERUSALEM" [see esp. 22:1–2], the wellspring of life in the new-found paradise of the Last Day. In the typological tradition of scriptural exegesis, which interprets events in the Old Testament as prefiguring moments in the life of Christ, MOSES' striking of the ROCK to produce the water of Meribah [Numbers 20:7–13] is related to the stigmata of Christ, whose blood brings salvation, and similarly to the water of baptism. Van Eyck's Ghent altar shows the heavenly spring dividing into SEVEN rivers, corresponding to



Spring symbolizing God's inexhaustible benevolence.
Hohberg, 1675

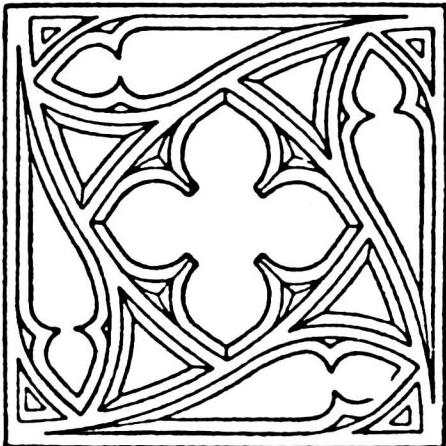
the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. (See also WELLS.)

The medieval collection *Gesta Romanorum* (ca. 1300) contains several novellas in which springs are important symbols; in one, a spring in Sicily that makes sterile women fertile and another makes fertile women sterile. "Interpretation: In the case of the former, we are to think of Christ, who makes a sterile person—a sinner—fertile and able to carry out works of mercy. The other spring is the devil, who opposes such transformations and often brings a good person to a bad end. . . . In Epirus there is a spring that extinguishes blazing TORCHES and ignites torches that have gone out. Interpretation: In the same way Christ puts out the bright torches—the 'wise'—of this world, and lights up the poor, whose flame this world has extinguished." In dream symbolism a spring, often near a TREE, is interpreted as a distinctly positive symbol of the "water of life." "When the dreamer hears the rustle of the tree and the rush of the spring, security is not far away: the fountain of youth is at hand" [Aeppli].



Springs. From J. Boschius's *Symbolographia*, 1702

square In symbolical tradition often designated by the successively more comprehensive terms "rectangle" and "tetragon"; a geometrical symbol associated with quadripartite spatial orientation, the organization of our domain according to the points of the compass and their supernatural guardians. As with the cross, the square is an indication of our wish to find our way in an apparently chaotic world by introducing di-



Square: Gothic window pattern, adapted to the square

rections and coordinates. Inherent in the square is an ordering principle that seems innately present in all humans; the figure forms a DUALITY with the CIRCLE, a form associated rather with the heavenly powers. The legendary "squaring of the circle" (i.e., constructing a square equal in area to a given circle, using only geometrical means) symbolizes the wish to bring the heavenly and terrestrial elements into an ideal harmony (Latin *coincidentia oppositorum*).

The design of many TEMPLES is based on the square, their gradations suggesting the cosmic MOUNTAIN of the universe (e.g., Angkor Wat in Cambodia). In the Temple of the Heavens in Peking (Beijing), as in the Borobudur (Java) the square is joined with the circle. Not only the city planning of the ancient Romans (cities made up of equal quadrants) but also such imaginary cities as the "heavenly JERUSALEM" of the Book of Revelation or J. V. Andreae's "Christianopolis" (17th century) further illustrate this model for the ideal city—a version of the cosmos, built to human scale, with its own AXIS MUNDI erected at the center. In ancient China, Persia, and Mesopotamia, the earth is represented as a square; in ancient India, it is referred to as *chaturanta* ("having four sides"). According to Chinese tradition, the *ho-t'u* ("river map"), a cosmological "magic square" divided into nine fields, came from the Hoangho. In the Old World, similar squares were constructed, in various contexts, from letters

and numbers; the interchangeability of the letters to form intelligible words, or the uniformity of the sums of rows or columns, was intended to symbolize harmony with the laws of the cosmos.

In GAMES, too, we find expressions of a tetradic cosmology, as in *patolli* (ancient Mexico) or the chessboard of the Old World, or the board on which the German game of *Mühle* is played, with its three concentric squares and the "ladders" that connect them. The design of the *Mühle* board is anticipated in cave drawings found in Austria, Italy, France, on the Isle of Man, the Balkan peninsula, and in Afghanistan (the Pamir region), as well as in prehistoric ceramics of the Villanova and Este civilizations (Italy). The cave drawings are found not only on horizontal but also on vertical surfaces, indicating that the designs were not used solely for "board" games but had symbolic significance as well, as representations of the cosmos.

In the MANDALAS used for meditation in Indian Buddhism we find a combination of the circle (a symbol of enlightenment, *bodhi*, directed toward the community, *sangha*) and the square to form a figure of harmonious union (see YANTRA).

See also EARTH and CUBE.

square, carpenter's Like the drafting COMPASS, an architect's instrument of considerable symbolic importance, appearing both



Carpenter's square and drafting compass held by master builder. Woodcut, 1536



Carpenter's Square: The right angle. J. Boschius, 1702

in Dürer's etching "Melancholia" and as an attribute of the apostle Thomas (the patron saint of builders). It continues to be significant in the symbology of FREEMASONRY, in the context of "right": the right angle stands for that which is right, for justice, the true law. The Master of the Lodge wears a miniature carpenter's square on his chest as a symbol of the powers and duties of his office. Otherwise, the right angle is often combined with the PLUMB LINE and the scales (the "three movable jewels" symbolizing the Master and his two lieutenants; the "immovable jewels" are raw stone, hewn stone, and the DRAWING BOARD, representing apprentice, lodge brother, and Master, respectively). A carpenter's square with unequal arms in the ratio 3:4 refers to the Pythagorean theorem, since it makes it possible to draw a TRIANGLE whose sides are in the ratio 3:4:5. According to J. Baurnjöpel (1793), the carpenter's square represents "the love of God and neighbor, with which [the Master] must be richly adorned; this jewel—which embraces all laws—also urges every brother, from his first entry into the temple onward, to practice every virtue of which a person is capable."

The carpenter's square was an important symbol in ancient China also. It appears in the hand of the mythical scholar Fu-hsi (or Fuxi), who is said to have invented the I CHING and is depicted with the underbelly of a SNAKE. The square symbolizes both

edification and the sanctifying power of magic.

squirrels Once viewed with distrust. The squirrel Ratatöskr ("rat-tooth") of Norse mythology constantly ran up and down the world-tree Yggdrasil and sowed strife between the EAGLE atop it and the DRAGON Nidhogg, by repeating to each one what the other had just said about it. The squirrel was also associated with the fiery Loki and consequently then in the Christian era with the DEVIL, who seemed to be embodied in the reddish, scurrying, elusive rodent.

stars "Fixed stars" light the HEAVENS at night and are considered symbols of cosmic order because of the regularity of their movement around the pole star (see AXIS MUNDI); they also stand for the "light from above," which is not always discernible. In many mythic traditions the stars are understood as resulting from metamorphoses of those who have died. Jewish speculative cosmology believed that every star had a guardian ANGEL and that constellations were harmonious groups of heavenly spirits. In Christian iconography the presence of stars indicated heavenly occurrences. The ceilings of ancient Egyptian burial chambers were adorned with depictions of a starry firmament. The VIRGIN Mary was often depicted not only standing on the lunar crescent but also surrounded by a halo (see NIMBUS) in the form of a star-studded CROWN. The great number of stars in the sky was used to symbolize the countless descendants

Sciurus.



Squirrel. Woodcut in Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, 1531



Stars: "Blazing Star," with G. Masonic symbol

of ABRAHAM. Christ proclaims himself "the bright and morning star" [Revelation 22:16]. The Star of Bethlehem, usually surrounded by eight beams, is of particular importance: it guided the Wise Men from the East to the manger where the Christ child lay. The six-pointed star (today called the Star of Zion or Star of David), made up of two triangles, was known as the *sigillum Salomonis* ("Solomon's seal") or *scutum Davidis* ("David's shield"). (See HEXAGRAM.) The five-pointed star, or PENTACLE, played a major role in the tradition of magic; it is considered a favorable symbol when one of its points is at the apex, and in the inverted position a sign of BLACK magic.

In ancient China the stars were closely observed (11,520 had been counted by the second century after Christ), and they play a major role in Chinese legends and customs. On New Year's Day, for example, everyone offered a sacrifice to "his" or "her" star.

In the symbolism of FREEMASONRY the "blazing star" (usually five-pointed, sur-

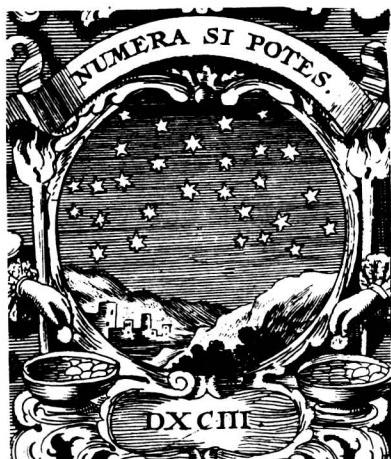
rounded by beams, and with a G in the middle, for "geometry," "God," or "Gnosis") is of particular significance: it symbolizes the LIGHT of the spirit.

The PLANETS (literally "wanderers") are distinguished from the "fixed" stars throughout the tradition of symbology. (See PLANETS, CIRCLE.)

The Incas of Peru believed that the stars were "the handmaidens of the moon, and therefore gave them the chamber next to their mistress (in the temple of Cuzco), so that they might be at her beck and call. They believed that the stars moved through the heavens with the moon, as her servants, and not those of the sun: after all, they were visible at night, not during the day" [Gar-



Stars: Correspondences of zodiac, body parts. Ratdolt, Flores Albumasaris, 1488



Stars: "Count them if you can." J. Boschius, 1702

cilaso de la Vega]. The Aztecs of Mexico viewed the stars as heavenly manifestations of the first fallen or sacrificed warriors; this is why they are sometimes represented in Aztec art by empty skulls.

Ancient cultures had differing interpretations for shooting stars—they marked the death of important men (ancient China) or the birth of a child, whose soul was descending from heaven to earth, where it would come to life.

Colloquial references to a person's "lucky star," or to something as "not being in the stars" (i.e., not meant to be), indicate the widespread acceptance of certain astrologi-



Stars: Jupiter as ruler of the zodiac. Cartari, 1647

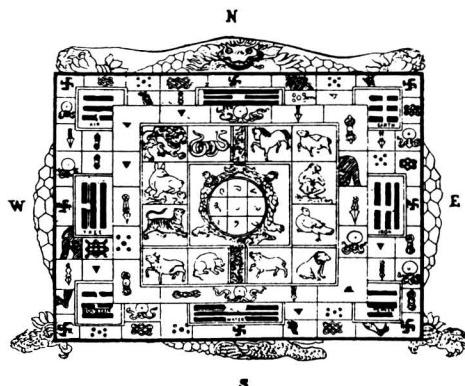
cal themes. "To reach for the stars" is to attempt to bring about the apparently impossible. If we "see stars" we are perceiving flashes of light after sustaining a blow to the head or some comparable experience. "Stars" (or "luminaries") are also illustrious celebrities, especially from the world of show business.

The symbolism of constellations is not always easily explained. Only a few of them clearly form connect-the-dot images of the figures for which they are named. Without a considerable leap of the imagination it is difficult to recognize a swan, lyre, maiden, and lion in the constellations Cygnus, Lyra, Virgo, and Leo, respectively; indeed, it is only the rare constellation (e.g., Orion, Cassiopeia) whose stars can be readily seen as forming a separate entity. This is why old maps of the heavens superimpose drawings of figures over the stars themselves; the



Stars: Paths of fixed stars around the celestial North Pole. Time exposure, 1898

drawings often seem to have little connection to the actual constellations. In fact, other cultures refer to the constellations by different names from those used in the Western European tradition, or even group the stars differently. The earliest use of constellations was as a navigational guide for the first seafarers; it was at this time that they were linked to legends and myths. The most important constellations were those that seemed to disappear, in turn and according to the time of year, at dusk and reappear with the sun at dawn. These were organized into a system based on the number 12 and referred to as a "circle of animals," the zodiac (from Greek *zoidion*, diminutive of *zōion*, "animal"), which divides the ap-



Stars: Tibetan cosmogram with zodiac figures bordering the central field

parent path of the sun into 12 "houses": Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces (see RAM, BULL, TWINS, CRAB, LION, VIRGIN, SCALES, SCORPION, CENTAUR, CAPRICORN, WATER SPIRITS, and FISH). Some of these names were already in use in the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and were taken over or altered by the Egyptians and the Greeks. The sun is associated with each constellation for the approximate duration of one lunar cycle (one month). Popular astrology attributes to each sign characteristics generally derived from the symbolic tradition of the constellation; the "sun sign"

is thought to determine, or at least influence, the character of those who are born "under" it.

(The ancient Chinese zodiac is made up of entirely different signs: RAT, OX, TIGER, HARE, DRAGON, SNAKE, HORSE, SHEEP, MONKEY, ROOSTER, DOG, and PIG. Each year is associated with one of these animals, and the year of a person's birth determines which animal's characteristics he or she shares.)

Incidentally, the region of the heavens associated with a "sign" of the Western zodiac is no longer the same as the region in which the corresponding constellation is actually to be found; the zodiac is in this sense regularly "displaced" as a function of time. The signs and the constellations were perfectly aligned some 2500 years ago, which suggests that the signs of the zodiac were first defined around that time. A Babylonian text from the year 420 b.c. referred to them as Laborer (for Aries), Pleiades (for Taurus), Twins (Gemini), Crab (Cancer), Lion (Leo), EAR OF GRAIN (held by a maiden, or Virgo), Scales (Libra), Scorpion (Scorpio), Centaur (as an archer, hence Sagittarius), "Goat-Fish" (for Capricorn), Gula (for Aquarius), and "Two Tails" (for Pisces).

The 12 signs of the zodiac have been grouped in a variety of ways, e.g., in three "crosses," to each of which four signs belong: the "cardinal cross" (Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn, associated with the

four archangels Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, and Uriel); the "fixed cross" (Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius, associated with the ancient "guardians of the four corners of the earth" and thus with the four EVANGELISTS: Luke/bull, Mark/lion, John/EAGLE, Matthew/ANGEL [or -man]); and the "movable cross" (Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces). They were also grouped in threes, with one of the "four ELEMENTS" associated with each group (fire: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius; earth: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn; air: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius; water: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces). In classical antiquity the individual signs had already been associated symbolically with the same characteristics as today, as the text "Trimalchio's Banquet" by Petronius (d. A.D. 66) indicates. (It was also said that "*nomina sunt omina*" ["names are portents"]; parents took great care in selecting names for their children, as is still the case today.) The basis of the entire doctrine of correspondences between signs of the zodiac and personality traits seems to have been formulated and promulgated most significantly in Hellenistic Alexandria in the second century after Christ.

The rejection of traditional star worship, as it was still practiced in historical times by the Sabeans in Harran, is grounded in Islamic tradition in the legend of the patriarch ABRAHAM, who, it is said, spent the first 15 years of his life hidden in a CAVE and eating from Allah's hand. (Abraham was evading the pursuit of King NIMROD, who feared the loss of his kingdom.) Then his mother led him out into the open, under the protection of the ANGEL Gibreel (Gabriel). "When Abraham glimpsed the evening star, the sole light in the night sky, he thought that it was the supreme being and wanted to worship it; but the star grew dim, and Abraham swore never to worship anything that dropped from sight. He had the same experience with the rising moon and with the early-morning sun. Each time he was tempted to view them as supreme and worship them. But when they had dropped below the horizon he was saddened and thus came to see that he must worship only the one who had created these lights and put



Stars: Ursa Major never sets. J. Boschius, 1702



Stars: Zodiac. Engraved brass plate, Middle Ages

them in orbit" [Beltz]. In strict monotheistic doctrine the lights in the heavens are only symbols of the Creator. The search for the ultimate master has a different manifestation in the Christian legend of St. CHRISTOPHER.

In Christian systems, the signs of the zodiac, being 12 in number, were readily associated with the 12 Apostles: Aries with Peter, Taurus with Andrew, Gemini with James the Greater, Cancer with John, Leo with Thomas, Virgo with James the Less, Libra with Philip, Scorpio with Bartholomew, Sagittarius with Matthew, Capricorn with Simon, Aquarius with Jude, and Pisces with Matthias. (See also PRECIOUS STONES.) The traditional number of the planets, SEVEN, takes on special symbolic associations through the reference in the Book of Revelation to "seven stars" which are "the angels of the seven churches" in Asia to which John's message is specifically addressed [1:16, 20]. The number of signs of the zodiac, 12, appears in the form of 12 stars, which crown the heavenly woman in Revelation 12:1. Stars falling from the heavens are harbingers of the END OF THE WORLD. The Christmas star, which the three Magi (astrologers) followed to Bethlehem, is often portrayed in art as a comet.

Stars appear frequently in coats of arms: in German HERALDRY often in the form of six-pointed stars, in English five- (or, less frequently, eight-) pointed. Goethe chose as his coat of arms a six-pointed star on a

BLUE field, in memory of the appearance of the morning star (VENUS) in a clear sky (1775; recognized 1782). A constellation (the Southern Cross) has adorned the arms of Brazil since 1889. White stars on the flag of the United States, symbolize the individual fifty states. In the arms of Singapore there are five stars, standing for democracy, peace, progress, law, and equality.

stepmother (German *Stiefmutter*) Unlike the mother-in-law, who plays a negative maternal role only in modern-day humor, the stepmother as the wicked anti-mother—the selfish enemy of her stepchildren—is found in fairy tale and idiom; she is ready even to kill her wards, and is thus not far removed from the most negative of female figures, the WITCH. The cause for this devaluation of a female figure who in real life is rarely characterized by her proverbial "wickedness," may lie in a relationship to the birth mother which has not been properly processed but whose direct negative expression convention has rendered taboo. The prefix "step-" comes from a root that means "bereft" and is related to the words "stub," "stoop," "stint."

The stepmother is of particular importance in the German-speaking world, where the idiom that is translated literally as "to complain to one's stepmother" means "to waste one's breath"; similarly, "to weep at one's stepmother's grave" is to feign sorrow. In the Brothers Grimm the figure of the stepmother is often literally a witch (as in "Snow White"). "Since Mother died, we haven't a moment of happiness. Our stepmother beats us every day, and when we go to her, she kicks us away" ("Little Brother and Little Sister"). (The one German exception to this general trend is the use of the diminutive *Stiefmütterchen* as the word for "pansy," the flower *Viola tricolor* prized in folk medicine. This usage, which dates back to the 16th century, has not been satisfactorily explained; the highly sentimental 19th-century language of FLOWERS offers an interpretation particularly surprising in the German context: the pansy "looks so sweet, so loving, so good, like the gentle

mother's heart that gives faith, hope, and love to the child of another.") In German or in English, the lot of a "stepchild" is to be neglected: "Public assistance programs became the stepchild of the new administration."

steps and stairways Symbolize the ascent to a higher plane, closer to HEAVEN. In ancient cultures TEMPLES are often terraced (the ziggurat of Mesopotamia, stupa of South Asian Buddhism [e.g., the Borubudur of Java], teocalli of ancient Mexico, or similar structures on the Peruvian coastline). The temples of ancient Greece were built on terraced foundations. Climbing steps clearly corresponds to an "archetypal" longing of the psyche to approach the heavenly spheres of the cosmos; this same longing underlies the notion of sacred MOUNTAINS. To rise above the everyday sphere and attain a higher one is to approach God. Terraced temples were constructed not only as surrogate mountains for flat regions like Mesopotamia but also in mountainous areas, e.g. the Mexican highland (Teotihuacan). This structure suggests that the actual construction of steps enabling a sort of ascent into heaven was itself important, and not merely the ascent *per se*.



Steps to philosopher's stone. Alchemist's allegory, St. Michelspacher, 1616

In the symbolism of FREEMASONRY the steps depicted in allegorical tapestries represent degrees of initiation. Three steps correspond to moderation, justice, and benevolence. SEVEN steps (also depicted as rungs of a ladder) represent the seven liberal arts of the medieval world, the seven ages of man, and the seven "cardinal virtues," believed to lead to self-knowledge, -mastery, and -improvement. The point seems to be that this material cannot be communicated all at once but must come gradually: the candidate must not be taxed, but rather shown the way step by step.

stone With its characteristic durability and permanence, stone is for many cultures a symbol of divine power. Other important features are that SPARKS can be made by striking some stones, and that others (meteorites) have fallen from the sky or have unusual forms. In the early stages in the progress of humanity, stones were used to make tools and weapons; this procedure presumably required that our remote ancestors distinguish between stones of varying qualities. The practice of building sacred structures from massive stones (megalithic dolmens, stone circles, alignments) is widespread and goes back to around 6000 b.c. (see MENHIR). In several myths supernatural beings and even humans are made from stones (see FLOOD). In the ancient Middle East a stone was a sign of God's presence and was covered with libations or anointed with oil and BLOOD. It thus became an altar (Beth-El, "the house of God"). Even simple heaps of stones (Kerkur in Northern Africa, Obo in Central Asia) have symbolic religious significance. The prestige of stone blocks formed by nature, not fashioned by human hands, is expressed in Exodus 20:25: "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." For this reason strictly observant Jews disapproved of the splendor of the JERUSALEM TEMPLE [Aron].

In ancient Greek myth a stone replaces the supreme god in the pantheon. The pri-

meval god Cronus (**SATURN**) feared that a son of his would supplant him as he himself had castrated and driven out his father Uranus; Cronus therefore devoured his children. His wife Rhea, however, wrapped a stone in a diaper; Cronus (see also **CHRONUS**) swallowed it, and the boy Zeus was able to grow up in hiding and later defeat his father. Later in Delphi Zeus erected the stone, that Cronus had spat out; it was anointed with oil, covered with a woolen **NET**, and revered as the **OMPHALOS** (literally "navel").

In the Greek legend of the great **FLOOD**, the surviving human couple, Deucalion and Pyrrha, create a new human race out of stones (the "bones of Mother Earth") thrown over their shoulders—to replace the old human race drowned in the flood.

PRECIOUS STONES, distinguished by their **COLOR**, brilliance, and durability, are of particular symbolic interest, but the block of stone used in construction ("The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," Psalm 118:22; compare Matthew 21:42) is also significant.

In the symbolic tradition of **FREEMASONRY**, the as yet unformed "rough stone" stands for the rank of apprentice; he aspires to become a "hewn stone," ready for incorporation in the great structure ("temple") of humanity. This notion goes back to the world of the builders of the great medieval cathedrals, for whom stone carving was of central importance. The **KEYSTONE** of an arch was often engraved with the master's personal, **RUNE**-like insignia.

In Christian symbolism stones are often associated with the ancient Jewish practice of stoning those who had been condemned to death (especially as blasphemers), as in depictions of St. Stephen, the first martyr, and, less frequently, of the penitent St. Jerome, who is occasionally shown beating his breast with a stone as a sign of contrition. Liborius of Paderborn was believed to come to the aid of those who suffered from kidney, gall, and bladder "stones," and is thus portrayed with three stones placed on a **BOOK**.

In the imagery of **ALCHEMY** the philosopher's stone (*lapis philosophorum*) is the sought-



Stone: Neolithic dolmen structure. Keryval, near Carnac, Brittany

after substance with which "base" metals could be transformed into **GOLD**.

Stones (and **THRONES** made of stone) are often mentioned in accounts of coronation ceremonies from the distant past. In ancient Ireland, for example, there was said to be a stone that would cry out when it was touched by the rightful **KING**. This "stone of knowledge" is on a hill in the city of Tara; it was called Fal, and said to be the penis of the hero Fergus (see also **LINGA**). Two other stones in Tara were so close together that ordinarily no one's **HAND** could pass between them (Blocc and Bluigne). But when they accepted a man as the future king, they parted before him and let his carriage (see **CHARIOT**) pass between them. When he drove on to Fal, it rubbed against the axle of his carriage so that everyone could hear its piercing cry [A. and B. Rees]. The Stone of Scone, originally associated with the crowning of Scottish kings, was moved to England in 1296. Its place under the Coronation Chair at Westminster Abbey symbolizes the rule of English monarchs over Scotland.

Rocks placed in crevices and other gaps could be removed, enabling a person to squeeze through, magically "scraping off" diseases and other disorders. Another superstition related to stones over which childless women would slide, bare-bottomed, in the hope of acquiring fertility from contact with these "bones of Mother Earth." Similarly, many prehistoric dolmens in Brittany were known as "hot stones" and believed to transmit their powers to infertile women who sat on them. Their "heat" symbolized life force and the ability to bring children into the

world. The stones were believed to store up energy from the earth and pass it along to those who came into contact with them. (See also *VULTURE*.)

The archaeologist K. J. Narr sees in the construction of tombs out of stone "certainly a taste for the monumental, and also a desire for a lasting burial place; it would not be surprising, at the same time, if a desire for continuity with past and future generations were decisive here. Megalithic monuments from prehistoric times offer some concrete indications that they represented a vital link to the deceased, that they were part of an elaborate tradition of ancestor worship, often associated with the establishment of sacred preserves, meeting places, even megalithic places of worship." Even today Jewish visitors to cemeteries place small stones on the grave marker to symbolize their respect for the dead.

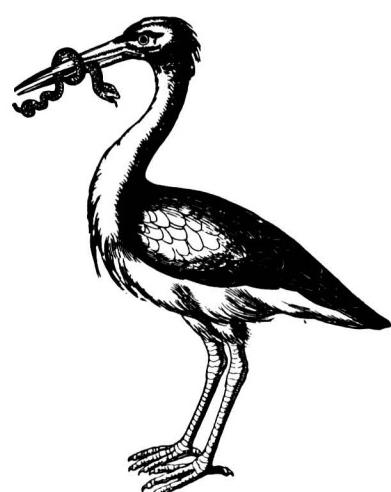
stones, pitted Carved blocks of STONE, or rocks occurring in nature, that are covered with indentations, are important in many ancient cults. The indentations may symbolize the womb; in ancient China, for example, those who wished to have children tossed pebbles at the surface of such stones. If they remained in the indentations, the pebble-thrower understood that the wish would be fulfilled. In other cultures the indentations, often erroneously referred to as "holes," symbolized WELLS or SPRINGS from which fertilizing water was thought to flow, or mouths from which the WIND emanated. (A Breton custom required that women pound with HAMMERS in the indentations of prehistoric stones whenever the waters were becalmed and fishing boats were unable to sail.) The pitted stones could also serve as receptacles for liquid sacrifices (libations), or be scraped to yield a fine powder that was ingested as a folk medicine (in part because the stone symbolized endurance). It is thus impossible to come up with a single, universally valid interpretation of this symbol.

Since these stones also occur naturally, not all of the so-called "sacrificial stones" that survive today are actually relics of pre-

Christian cults. Nevertheless, popular legend generally associates them with "heathen ritual," "blood sacrifice," and the like. The persistence of this interpretation simply documents how deeply rooted our beliefs are in the magic powers of BLOOD—and our associations with stones as focal points for "primitive" rituals. In fact, when pitted stones were used as sacrificial receptacles, the liquids in question were more often MILK or water than blood.

It has been suggested that the pitted stones were deliberately hammered as representations of heavenly constellations; little proof has been offered, however, in support of this hypothesis. It should also be noted that the stones may have come into being in different ways in different locations, independent of all historical connections and influences.

stork Although the Old Testament includes all wading birds among the "unclean" creatures of the earth (see *IBIS*), the stork is otherwise considered a favorable symbol, primarily because it is the scourge of SNAKES. It thus came to be associated with Christ and his disciples, who destroyed satanic creatures; in northern latitudes, moreover, its regular return every spring was linked to Easter and the Resurrection. This pattern seems to explain the notion that the stork brings babies, although other factors also



Stork eating snake. C. Gesner, *Icones Avium*, 1560

contributed: it is a bird associated with the soul, and, as a WATER bird, it was believed to have access to the “waters of creation,” the source of all fertility. In one ancient legend the stork feeds its elderly father, and this made the bird a symbol of filial love and devotion. The stork was also believed to have a long life, which made it a symbol (especially in China) of human longevity. In the Netherlands, storks nesting on rooftops are traditionally believed to be harbingers of good fortune. Standing calmly on one leg, the bird seems dignified, contemplative, and alert, which makes it a symbol of meditation and contemplation. In the psychoanalytic interpretation of the stork as a symbol, its beak represents the phallus, and the waters from which it fetches babies represent the womb.

storm In mythic and symbolic tradition, usually clearly distinguished from the blowing of the WINDS, the storm represents a powerful manifestation of the gods and their will. The destructive power of the storm wind (e.g., that of the Japanese god Susano-o, or of the Mayan Huracan [source of our word “hurricane”]) led to special rituals to appease the gods; but storms often bring needed RAIN, which makes their personifications ambivalent figures (e.g., the Babylonian storm god Adad [Syrian Hadad], who was also called the “Lord of Abundance,” since he also was responsible for making the land fertile). Storm gods are often identical with those associated with THUNDER and LIGHTNING. The *maruts* of ancient India, storm spirits and companions of the god Indra,



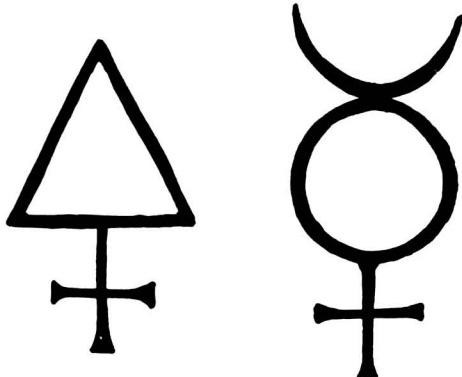
Storms as bad omens. "Practica Teutsch," 1521

struck the CLOUD “fortresses” with their battle-axes so that rain could pour forth. In Germanic tradition the storm wind was often said to be Wotan’s horde, the rush of a ghostly army, then later the passing of an impious spirit breaking the sabbath rest. In the Alps flour and bread crumbs were often scattered into the storm wind to appease it (a practice condemned as devil worship by the Inquisition). In the baroque period storms were likened to the blows of fate, the sorrows of life on earth: “When storm wind blows and thunder crashes down,/ The dove hides in the hollows of the cliff./ So Christians, from the ragings of this world,/ In His own wounds do find their shelter sure” [Hohberg].

sulfur and mercury Designated in the symbolic language of ALCHEMY as the two primal essences, or “elements,” one “burning,” the other “volatile.” All matter was believed to be composed from the two terms of this DUALITY (combined in varying proportions and in different degrees of purity). When the alchemist’s task was understood literally as the transformation of base metals into GOLD, this transformation was to be achieved by greater purification of sulfur and mercury and increasing the proportion of (the “spiritual”) mercury in their union.



Storm caused by witch's spell. Olaus Magnus, *Historia*, 1555



Sulfur and Mercury: Alchemist's symbols for the "burning" and "volatile" elements

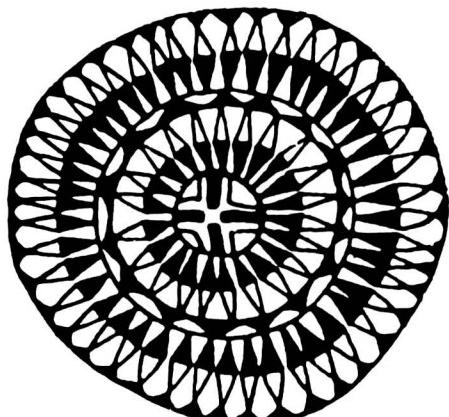
Paracelsus (1493–1541), or a historically undocumented alchemist named Basilius Valentinus, added *sal* ("salt") as the third of the "philosophical" elements, the one associated with the "tangibility" of matter: when wood burns, the flame comes from the sulfur, the mercury goes off in the form of smoke, and the "salt" is left behind in the form of ASHES. This version of how matter is constituted is not totally dissimilar to the modern account, proposed by atomic physicists, in which the "elemental" components are protons, electrons, and neutrons. The alchemical version was abandoned only in the modern era, when it was discovered that the real element sulfur does not occur in metals that have been fully purified. (See also CADUCEUS.)

sun The "daytime star" is naturally the most prominent of all heavenly phenomena. Countless religions associate a sky god with the sun, and there are countless names that designate this sun god as the destroyer of DARKNESS. (In one Babylonian formulation, the sun god is addressed as "you who illuminate darkness, light up the heavens, and annihilate evil above and below. . . . All princes are gladdened when they behold you; all the gods rejoice in you.") The solar cult of the Egyptian god Amon-Re was transformed by the pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Ekhнатон, 1365–1348 b.c.) to a monotheistic system. ("So beautiful do you appear at the heavenly locus of light, O living sun,

who first began to live. . . .") Only in the Old Testament is the sun considered to be merely one of two "great lights" [Genesis 1:16] placed by God in the firmament—a dramatic contrast to the solar cult of the "pagans." In Christian iconography the sun, rising over and over again in the East, symbolizes immortality and resurrection. There are fourth-century mosaics showing Christ as a Helios-like figure in a solar CHARIOT surrounded by sunbeams, or surrounded by a solar NIMBUS. Since Christ is also triumphant over time (*chronocrator*), he is frequently associated with the sun (which measures out the length of each day) in Romanesque art.

Graphic symbols for the sun include both the still-current CIRCLE surrounded by beams and the earlier basic form, the "solar wheel": a circle with a point at its center and perpendicular lines dividing into quadrants. In ALCHEMY the sun is associated with glittering GOLD ("the earth's sun, the KING of metals"); in ASTROLOGY, with the LION. In patriarchal societies the sun is usually thought of as masculine (although the German language, with its feminine *die Sonne*, is an exception), as is the sun deity (with the exception of the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami—who, nevertheless, was created by the sky god Isanagi).

In regions subject to the threat of drought, the sun, with its heat, can take on ambivalent or negative aspects, or it must be



Sun design on buffalo-skin coat. Blackfeet civilization, U.S. Plains

fortified for its course across the sky with the BLOOD of human sacrifices, as in ancient Mexico. See also CHARIOT, BALL, and KING.

The most striking example of sun worship in an ancient culture was in Peru, where the sun was believed to be the divine ancestor of the Inca nation. The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) describes the sun temple of the capital Cuzco as follows: “All four walls were covered from top to bottom with gold sheets and bars. Toward the front was what we would call the principal altar; this is where the figure of the sun stood, consisting of a sheet of gold twice as thick as the sheets that covered the walls. This figure, with its round face surrounded by darting flames, was made from a single sheet of gold, and looked just the same as in paintings. It was so big that it took up the entire forward part of the temple, extending all the way across from side to side. . . . On each side of the figure of the sun were its ‘children’: the bodies of the dead kings, embalmed (however this was accomplished) so that they looked as if they were still alive. They sat on their accustomed golden thrones, which were positioned on golden girders. . . . The temple gates were gilded like portals. On the exterior of the temple was a golden cornice, made of planks more than a yard in width, which surrounded the entire temple like a crown.” The association of sun and gold was apparently nowhere so persistently realized as in the Andes, and

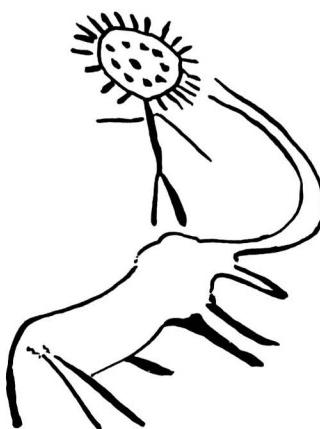


Sun: Apollo as sun god and archer. Cartari, 1647

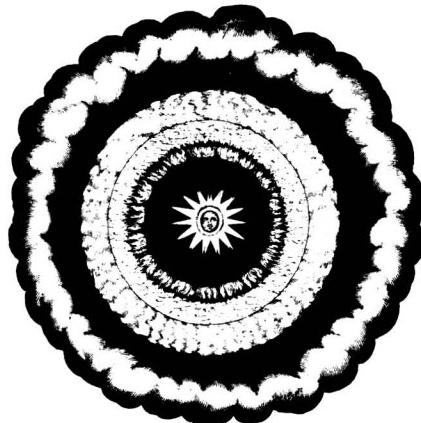
the symbolic linking of the immutable “noble” elements with mummification is equally striking: in the ancient Peruvian Temple of the MOON, the female ancestors of the ruling family were “preserved” and revered in surroundings made of SILVER.

Japan is actually named for the sun. The Japanese word for Japan, Nihon, is made up of elements meaning “sun” (*ni*) and “source” (*hon*); thus the country is often called “the Land of the Rising Sun.”

In astrology, as in classical antiquity, the sun is spoken of as one of the “PLANETS,” because of its apparent revolutions around the earth (which determine the length of our years). The sun is one of the “principal lights” (like the moon), and it is frequently referred to as “masculine, dominant, hot.” The sign of the zodiac in which the sun is located at the time of a person’s birth determines the “birth sign.” The sun is said to rule the sign Leo (see LION); in Aries it is “exalted,” and Aquarius is the sign of its “detriment.” Its color is reddish orange; the PRECIOUS stones associated with it are DIAMOND, RUBY, topaz, chrysolite, and hyacinth. Traditionally, the sun is associated symbolically with KINGS, paternal authority, worldly status, fame, victory, life force, and force of will. The sun and the moon are referred to in the symbolism of FREEMASONRY as “the two great lights of the physical world, the images of the first and second supervisors or foremen; they signify the obligation of



Sun god (?) on bull. Siberian cave drawing, Alma Ata, late Bronze Age



Sun: Creation of sun as center of universe. Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*, 1617

every good Freemason to seek the true light, day and night, and never linger in the darkness of vice" [Baurnjöpel].

In iconography the sun is usually portrayed either as the sun god crowned with sunbeams, or as the solar disk, with a human face, surrounded by beams. Prehistoric Asian cave drawings often show human figures with a "solar wheel" surrounded by spikes in place of the head; the wheel is divided into quadrants, each containing points (possibly indicating a division of the year into quarters and months or weeks). Prehistoric northern African art includes images of "sun BULLS" and "sun RAMS" (not unlike later religious images found in Egypt), each with a disk on its head.

In coats of arms the sun (with or without a face) is usually drawn surrounded by alternating tickmarks and flaming darts.

swallow The symbolologists of antiquity did not distinguish between swallow, martin, and swift: they were each simply called *chelidon* (Greek) or *hirundo* (Latin). According to legend they are always punctual in their southward migrations; they were believed to spend their winters devoid of plumage (Aristotle, Pliny the Elder). There are songs in ancient Greek celebrating the swallow as a harbinger of spring and likening its cry to the speech of "barbarians." The reddish stone *chelidoni*s, found in the stomachs of young

swallows, was supposed to have magical powers. Swallows nesting on rooftops have not always been thought of as promising good fortune, as they are today. Plutarch (A.D. 46–120) mentions the Egyptian myth of the metamorphosis of the goddess Isis into a swallow. The proverb "One swallow doesn't make a summer" appears already in texts of Aristotle and Aristophanes. The swallow (like the DOVE) was a frequent attribute of the love goddess Aphrodite. Consuming the ASHES of a swallow that had been sitting on its eggs was believed to make a man irresistible to women, and the blood (and even the excrement) of the bird promoted HAIR growth. In the Middle Ages the swallow (like the CRANE) and its annual return symbolized spring and the Resurrection. Swallows in fables give their young the ability to see by feeding them juice squeezed from the swallowwort or celandine plant (*Chelidonium majus*), all of whose names refer to its association with the bird; this legendary practice came to symbolize the opening of the eyes of the dead at the Last Judgment.

In China as in Europe the swallow (yen) was a symbol of springtime, and it was believed that the bird spent winters inside a BIVALVE at sea. Its nesting at someone's house promised childbirth, happiness, success, and marital joy. The swallow was also associated symbolically with the relationship between an elder and a younger brother. The nests of the Indian water martin, which are made from algae, are still prized today for strengthening sexual potency.

Medieval bestiaries contain an abundance of positive interpretations of the swallow.



Swallow. Fresco, Thera (Santorini), Greece, ca. 1600 b.c.

Its cry is likened to that of the repentant sinner. "The swallow does not sit down to eat, but eats on the wing; so, too, should we seek out the heavenly realm, far from the terrestrial. . . . The swallow traverses the seas when winter and cold weather are impending; so, too, should we flee the bitterness and cold of the world and wait in the warmth of love for the frost of temptation to depart from our spirits" [Unterkircher].

swan (Latin *cynus* or *olor*) A BIRD of great symbolic significance for the ancient world (despite its rarity in Mediterranean regions); its limber neck and WHITE plumage made it a symbol of noble purity. This is why Zeus chose to approach the unsuspecting Leda in this guise. It is interesting that Homer (in Hymn 21) praises the singing swan, which (unlike the mute swan) lives only in more northern latitudes. This swan is associated with Apollo, who also was said to be revered especially by the northern mythic race of Hyperboreans. The swan was present at the god's birth, carried him across the sky, and derived from him its gift of prophecy. At times the swan is referred to as the enemy or opponent of the EAGLE or (like the eagle) of the SNAKE, each of which the swan frequently defeats. The proverbial "swan song" (the significant final words or performance of a great person) goes back to the prophetic talent of the swan, already mentioned by Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.): it supposedly foresees its impending death and emits extraordinary cries bemoaning its own passing. In fact, the singing swan of Northern Europe (*cynus musicus*) can produce a powerful



Swan: "Unblemished radiance." J. Boschius, 1702

trumpet-like note in the upper register and a weaker one in the lower, even shortly before it is paralyzed by severe cold. If several of these swans cry at once, they do give the impression of song. According to Germanic superstition, VIRGINS could be transformed into prophetic swan maidens (as in the *Nibelungenlied*); similar myths (in which the maidens can doff their plumage) are found in a variety of cultural contexts. In Christian thought the *cynus musicus* came to symbolize the Savior crying out from the Cross *in extremis*. The association of the bird with song (and hence lyrical beauty) led Ben Jonson to call Shakespeare "the sweet swan of Avon."

The swan often symbolizes feminine grace; Aphrodite and Artemis (Latin DIANA) are often portrayed as accompanied by swans. It is in part because of the association of swans with physical grace that Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* is for many the quintessential classical ballet.

In the imagery of ALCHEMY the swan symbolizes the element mercury (see SULFUR AND MERCURY) in its volatility.

The swan is important in HERALDRY as well, frequently appearing in coats of arms (e.g., those of Boulogne-sur-Mer and the Saxon city of Zwickau, whose Latin name was Cygnea). A chivalric Order of the Swan was founded in 1440, then renewed in 1843 by the German king Friedrich Wilhelm II



Swan song. J. Boschius, 1702

as a charitable secular order, but never came into operation.

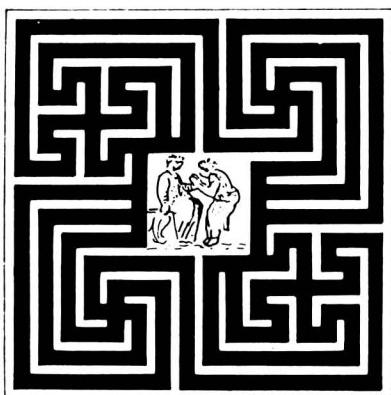
A strange, negative symbolic interpretation of the swan surfaces in medieval bestiaries. In contrast to its snow-white plumage, it is written, the bird has "utterly BLACK flesh": "Thus it is a symbol of the hypocrite, whose black sinful flesh is clothed by white garments. When the bird's white plumage is stripped away, its black flesh is roasted in the fire. So, too, will the hypocrite, once dead, be stripped of worldly splendor and descend into the fires of hell" [Unterkircher]. Böckler, on the other hand, writes that swans do battle even with eagles if attacked. They "are the royalty among water fowl; the meaning that they carry is of the whiteness of peace" (1688). This poetic formulation is reminiscent of the swan knight, Lohengrin.

swastika A particular form of cross, most familiar as a POLITICAL SYMBOL associated by Adolf Hitler's followers with that which is "Aryan," Germanic, or Teutonic. From 1935 until 1945, the swastika (BLACK against a WHITE background) with an EAGLE atop it symbolized Nazi Germany. The swastika is found in many different cultures of both the Old and the New World; it is actually a variation on the cross formed by two axes of a WHEEL. The bending of the ends of the four arms in a single direction suggests a circular or dynamic movement. (The arms can be bent either clockwise or counter-

clockwise.) The swastika thus suggests, for example, the recurrence of the seasons of the year. It has been documented in the pre-Aryan civilization of Mohenjo-Daro on the Indus River (ca. 2000 b.c.); in ancient China the swastika (*wan tsu*) is a symbol of the four points of the compass. Since ca. A.D. 700 the Chinese have also associated it with the NUMBER 10,000, or infinity. In the Buddhist tradition of India it is referred to as the "SEAL on Buddha's HEART"; in Tibet, too, it is associated with good fortune and serves as a talisman. In Indian Jainism the four arms represent the four levels of existence: the world of the gods, of humans, of animals, and the underworld, respectively. In Mediterranean cultures the perpendicular tips of the four ends were sometimes curled, or further bent to form mazes. Thought of as a quadruplication of the Greek letter gamma, it was also called the *crux gammata*. The Old Norse amulet referred to as "Thor's HAMMER" was also formed like a swastika. The symbol appears less frequently in pre-Columbian cultures of the Western hemisphere.

Gnostic sects of late antiquity used a sort of swastika, formed by four legs bent at the knee, as a secret symbol, not unlike the (three-legged) TRISKELION.

sword Neither the weapon itself nor the sword as symbol goes back to "the earliest times," since swords could obviously not have been produced before the Bronze Age. (The "wooden swords" of the first inhabitants of South America are closer to clubs than to what we think of as swords.) When cherubim (see ANGEL) are placed at the east of the Garden of Eden with "a flaming sword which turned every way" [Genesis 3:24] after ADAM AND EVE are driven out of their earthly PARADISE, this is an indication that the Biblical account itself does not date from the era that it describes. The swords of the Bronze Age were often richly decorated, which indicates that their function was not merely utilitarian. In the Germanic tradition we find accounts of "sword dances," and the names given to the swords of legendary heroes (names like Balmung,



Swastika: Labyrinthine floor mosaic, Roman villa in Sparta



Sword as a guarantee of chastity. *Tristan and Isolde*, 1484

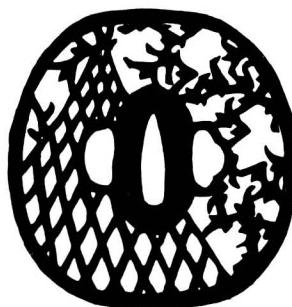
"anointing," or *Nagelring*, "ring of nails") suggest that swords were endowed with magic or symbolic values. Medieval KNIGHTS were dubbed using the tip of a sword. A sword placed between a man and a woman in bed symbolized chastity (*signum castitatis*).

There are Egyptian pylon reliefs of the Rameses period (14th-11th century B.C.) showing the pharaoh in a ritual pose, raising a hand to seize a sword that a god is holding out to him: the SICKLE-like sword called a *chopesh*, which suggests some Asian influence. The foreign *shirdana* mercenaries from the North, however, carry long swords.

In ancient Chinese depictions we find magicians with swords to drive off demons. There was also a tradition of distinct "male" and "female" swords, forged from the liver and kidneys of a mythic HARE that ate metal

and lived in the Kuenlun Mountains. When a woman dreamt of drawing a sword, it was believed, she would give birth to a boy (as in the Freudian psychology of the 20th century, the sword was a phallic, or masculine, symbol); the possession of a sword, in a woman's dream, promised good fortune, whereas, in a man's dream, a sword falling into WATER foretold the death of a woman.

In Japan the proper use of the sword was the art of the samurai, who had two different weapons: the *katana*, a long sword used in battle, and the *wakizashi*, a short sword for hand-to-hand combat and for ritual suicide (*seppuku*, referred to in the West as "harakiri"). The makers of swords had to obey certain commandments of abstinence because of the sacred nature of their craft. The hilt (*tsuba*) separating the blade from the



Sword hilt (*tsuba*). Japan, ca. 1750

handle was richly adorned. Today a sword fight (*iai-do*) with a training partner is carried out only as an exercise with narrowly-defined safety precautions; fencing with BAMBOO swords (*kendo*) is derived from the old samurai tradition. In Shinto myth the STORM god Susano-o (see CAVE, RICE) kills an eight-headed SNAKE and draws from its tail the sword "Ame no murakomo no tsuguri," which today, accompanied by PEARLS and a MIRROR, is among the imperial treasures of Japan.

In the Occident the sword is the weapon of the archangel Michael, King David, and Judith, who used one to behead Holofernes. In the Book of Revelation a sword comes out of Christ's mouth [1:16], a symbol of indomitable power and divine truth, coming down from heaven like a bolt of LIGHTNING.



Sword held by archangel Michael. From a woodcut by Lucas Cranach, 1506

The sword is a symbol of sovereignty in the hand of St. Stephen of Hungary or Charlemagne; of a martyr's death when it is an attribute of the saints Paul, James the Greater, Thomas Beckett, Catherine, or Lucia. In the Gospel according to Luke, Simeon tells the Virgin Mary that her soul will be pierced by a sword, a prediction of the extraordinary suffering that she will undergo. In baroque iconography we occasionally find depictions of **SEVEN** swords, a reference to the seven sorrows of Mary.

In general, the sword is a symbol of vitality and strength, most frequently an attribute of gods of war (see **MARS**) or (as a symbol for lightning) **THUNDER**. In Catholic doctrine the "two swords" symbolized spiritual and temporal dominion; Pope Innocent III, among others, spoke of **EMPERORS** or **KINGS** as his vassals to whom he turned over the temporal sword as a fief.

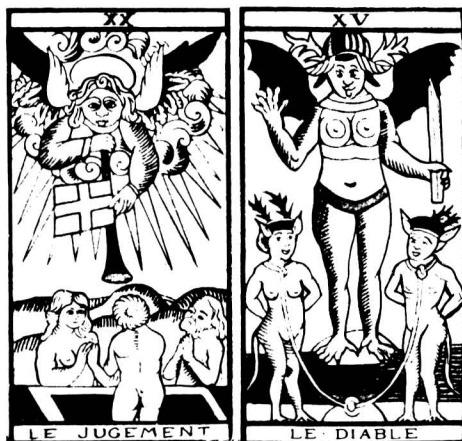
The most familiar sword in English tradition is King Arthur's Excalibur, which only the young Arthur was able to draw out of the stone in which it was lodged. In

Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, however, it is the Lady of the Lake who hands Excalibur to Arthur.

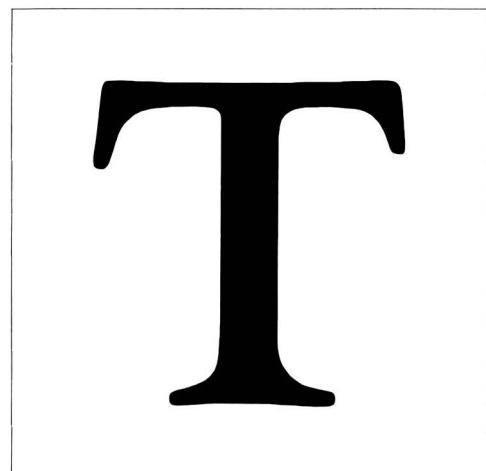
Only in exceptional cases do we find the decidedly masculine symbol of the sword in a woman's hand. **JOAN OF ARC** (burned at the stake in 1431) claimed that St. Catherine (see above) had told her of a sword buried underneath a village church: "The sword was underground, totally rusted, with **FIVE CROSSES** on it. I had learned from my voices that it was there. . . . I had a letter written to the local Church authorities, asking for the sword. They sent it to me" [from the trial records, as quoted by A. Holl]. After great military victories, however, the inspired soldier (who was canonized in 1920) was to perish by the sword (compare Matthew 26:52).

We speak of a threat of impending disaster as a "sword of Damocles," referring to the sword that Dionysius of Syracuse suspended over the head of his courtier Damocles at a banquet to teach him how precarious a king's lot was.

tarot Usually refers to a symbolic tradition making use of certain cards from the tarok deck for the purpose of fortunetelling and philosophical speculation. Although some theories would place its origins in the mysteries of ancient Egypt, historians generally believe that the deck was invented in 14th-century Italy when images from a pictorial encyclopedia (used for teaching children) were combined in Venice with the Spanish set of numbered playing cards. The names given to the 22 trump cards (the Major Arcana) seem closely related to medieval imagery and readily capture the symbolic imagination; this explains the appeal of tarot for those embracing mystical doctrines and practices. "The close association between mysticism and tarot has become so well established that it often seems that tarot exists only to serve as a symbolic vehicle for occult theories and speculation" [Tegtmeier]. The names of the Major Arcana are as follows: 0—The Fool (French *Le Mat*, associated with the ELEMENT air); I—The Magician (*Le Bateleur*, MERCURY); II—The High Priestess (*La Papesse*, the MOON); III—The Empress (*L'Impératrice*, VENUS); IV—The EMPEROR (*L'Empereur*, Aquarius); V—The Pope or Hierophant (*Le Pape*, Taurus); VI—The Lovers (*L'Amoureux*, Gemini); VII—The CHARIOT (*Le Chariot*, Cancer); VIII—Justice (*La Justice*, LIBRA); IX—The HERMIT (*L'Ermité*, Virgo); X—The WHEEL



Tarot: Two cards from the Major Arcana (Judgment, Devil). France, ca. 1840



of Fortune (*La Roue de Fortune*, JUPITER); XI—Strength (*La Force*, Leo); XII—The Hanged Man (*Le Pendu*, WATER); XIII—Death (*La Mort*, Scorpio); XIV—Temperance (*La Tempérance*, Sagittarius); XV—The DEVIL (*Le Diable*, CAPRICORN); XVI—The LIGHTNING-Struck TOWER (*La Maison-Dieu*, MARS); XVII—The STAR (*L'Étoile*, Aries); XVIII—The Moon (*La Lune*, Pisces); XIX—The sun (*Le Soleil*, the sun); XX—Judgment (*La Trompête*, or *Le Jugement*, FIRE); XXI—The World, or The Universe (*Le Monde*, SATURN).

In esoteric speculation these cards are associated with the "channels" that combine the ten sephirot or forces of the Cabala and correspond to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. For example, in the "sephirotic TREE" the channel of the letter *beth* with its associated trump I (The Magician) links the sephirot Kether (the CROWN) and Binah (understanding), and the channel of *aleph* with the trump 0 (The Fool) links Kether and Chochmah (wisdom). [See in particular Golowin, Nichols, and Tegtmeier.]

The four suits of the Minor Arcana are SWORDS, Wands, Cups, and PENTACLES, associated with the elements air, fire, water, and earth, respectively.

tea In the Far East, tea is not merely a beverage but also a symbol of cultivation and meditation. *Sado*, the "way of tea-drinking," is part of the life-discipline of the

Japanese Zen tradition. In Buddhist legend, the first tea leaves came from the eyelids of the meditating Bodhidharma (Japanese "Daruma"). The Holy One, it is said, cut them off himself so as not to fall asleep, and this is why the leaves that grew from them function as stimulants. In Chinese tradition it is written (ca. A.D. 800) that tea was discovered by a Lu-Yü, who supposedly was hatched from an EGG. The Japanese tea ceremony goes back to the year 1286 and is attributed to the monk Shomei, who imported the beverage and all associated utensils from China. Tea is to be taken in a GARDEN (*roji*) containing a tea house (*chahitsu*); it is not to be swallowed hastily, but rather enjoyed in a state of inner composure in which one concentrates on inner and outer harmonies; each step in the process is meticulously prescribed. According to Zen philosophers, the feeling of peace and fulfillment that comes with the tea ceremony then carries over into the rest of one's daily life. For this reason the teacups (*chawan*) used should be beautiful but simple (*wabi*), both in form and in color. Collectors are especially fond of teacups from Kyoto, which are traditionally BLACK and RED in color.

Tea has a special place in the British Isles as well: its popularity there still surpasses that of coffee, and for many the beverage and accompanying snacks have almost ritual status.

Tell, William (German Wilhelm Tell, Tall, or Thäll) A legendary figure symbolizing the Swiss longing for independence and liberty. According to tradition, Tell was a hunter from the village of Bürglen (Uri), forced by the tyrannical Hapsburg governor Gessler to shoot an APPLE on his son's head with an ARROW from his crossbow. He is successful but soon thereafter kills Gessler himself, thus giving the signal for the Swiss uprising against Hapsburg rule and the establishment of the new Confederation.

Modern interpreters, while understanding the legend as symbolizing the Swiss people's aspirations for political control of their own destinies and their own land, note that the theme of the hunter forced to shoot at his



William Tell shoots the apple from his son's head.
Woodcut, Meister D. S., 1707

own son is far older than the period in which the incident is supposed to have taken place in Switzerland. In Saxo Grammaticus' account (ca. 1200) the hunter is named Toko (in the Palnatoki legend); in the Old Norse saga of Thidrek, Egill; in Scottish legend, William Cloutesly. The first treatment of the material in the context with which we are now familiar, is a "Song of Tell" (14th century), subsequently extended in popular ballads and linked around 1470 with the conspiracy to overthrow Hapsburg rule. The Tell legend became famous beyond the borders of Switzerland through Schiller's play *William Tell* (1804) and Rossini's opera (1829), the latter written in the spirit of the Italian Risorgimento. Tell came to symbolize the staunchly fearless hero, rebelling against oppression in the name of liberty.

One element in the Tell legend, the placing of the governor's hat on a pole, should be understood as an ancient symbol of judicial or military authority and not of tyrannical rule.

temple Not only a structure erected for sacred purposes but also a symbol for any sort of sanctuary or holy place, or for any higher striving to establish a place for things of the spirit in the midst of the secular world. In Christian symbology the individual is spoken of as a "temple of God" (com-

pare I Corinthians 6:19), or it is said that "Christ is the true temple to which we must go. . . . The temple of God is His word given form; in the temple of the Holy Spirit God's word is taught. . . . We must make our way past all of Satan's armies into the temple of Jesus Christ" [Jakob Böhme, 1575–1624].

The word "temple" goes back to the same root as the Greek *temenos*, "secluded realm," referring to the space for worship, sealed off by walls from the secular world. Symbolically, however, these walls, although they are to protect the shrine against desecration and outsiders against the extraordinary powers contained within, are also to be movable, so that the holy realm within can be extended as far as possible.

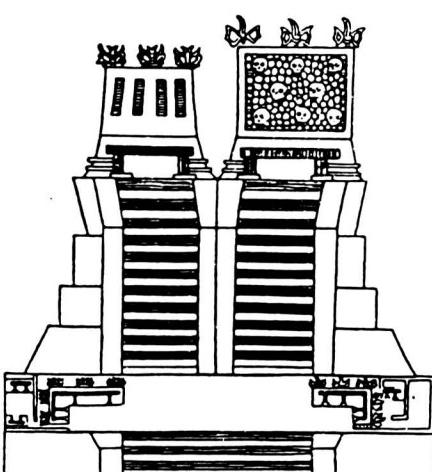
Temples are often constructed along the lines of the prevalent cosmological model of the universe; they thus stand for the ordered world as a whole. (See also **AXIS MUNDI**, **OMPHALOS**, **CROSS**, **SQUARE**.) The ziggurats of ancient Mesopotamia (see **BABEL**, **TOWER**) often have names that when translated reveal their status as divine mountains, centers of the universe, or points of contact between the divine and human realms: "House of the Foundations of Heaven and Earth" (Babylon); "Temple of the Seven Guardians of Heaven and Earth" (Birs Nimrud); "House of the Mountain of the Uni-



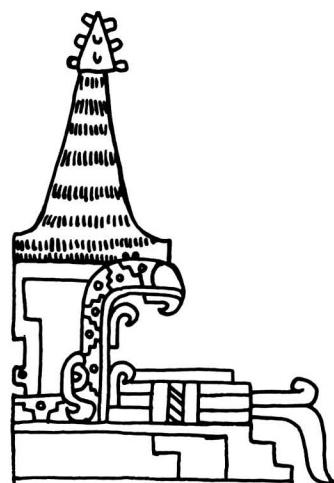
Temple of Augustus (Rome). Coin, Ephesus, 19th century B.C.

verse." The name of the great altar of **SOLOMON**'s temple, 'Ar'el, comes from the Akkadian *arallu*, which can mean either "underworld" or "mountain of the gods." Thus both the altar and the **STONE Shetiya** beneath it were presumably thought of both as a symbolic mountain and as an umbilical center of the universe. Greek and Roman temples, for many Westerners, are the most significant surviving examples of classical architecture.

This temple symbolism, along with the notion of an ideal central point, is of great importance in the philosophic tradition of **FREEMASONRY**. King Solomon's temple, work on which began in 966 B.C., was considered in Jewish cosmology to constitute an idealized image of the world. The outer vestibule (*ulam*) corresponded to the sea; the shrine itself (*hekal*), to the land; and the dark holy



Temple: Double shrine on pyramid. Colonial period, Mexico, Codex Ixtlilxóchitl



Temple: Shrine of cave god, portal in form of dragon's mouth. Mexico, Codex Borgia

of holies (*debir*), to HEAVEN. In the world of the builders of the great medieval cathedrals, this temple in JERUSALEM became an ideal prototype for the construction of a spiritual "temple of humanity" (or "all-encompassing brotherly love") that was to admit a peaceful brotherhood consisting of those "who were to build it and who were identical with it. For the idea of the construction of the temple can be understood only when the act of building and the human race are seen as equivalent" [Lennhoff and Posner]. The Freemason's tools (carpenter's SQUARE, drafting COMPASS, TRIANGLE, HAMMER, etc.) are symbolically linked to the construction of an ideal temple in honor of "the almighty master builder of the universe"; each individual enters the fraternity as a "cubic STONE." Meeting-places of individual lodges are also called "temples." (See also MOUNTAIN.)

Thanatos Ancient Greek personification of death; described as the twin brother of HYPNOS (Latin SOMNUS), the DREAM, and the son of Nyx, the NIGHT. In European art and literature Thanatos is portrayed as a serious, winged youth with an extinguished (or flickering) TORCH in his hand. In the ancient world he was a negative figure, and even the gods hated him. He was said to accompany the souls of the dead to the underworld (see AFTERLIFE), except in those myths in which this was the duty of the



Thanatos burying the dead. Detail from an Attic vase, ca. 450 b.c.

FURIES. In one of the plays of Euripides (ca. 480–406 b.c.), Thanatos attempts to take the soul of Alcestis (who gave up her life to save her husband Admetus) from her grave and transport it to Hades, but Heracles (HERCULES) overpowers Thanatos and restores Alcestis to the world of the living (operas by Lully and Gluck; oratorio by Handel).

thistle A plant associated today with "prickliness," is the national emblem of Scotland. In earlier times a number of varieties of thistle were more esteemed, both for their medicinal applications and for a different set of symbolic associations. It was believed in classical antiquity that thistles could reverse evil omens and dispell demonic powers. Although they are generally eaten only by DONKEYS, humans can eat them as well; if a pregnant woman ate them, it was believed, she would give birth to a son. The variety *Centum capita* arouses irresistible feelings of love in the opposite sex (a statement attributed to Pythagoras). Since cut thistles do not lose their form, they are a Chinese image for loyalty and longevity. In the Christian Occident the sufferings of Christ and the martyrs were symbolized by the prickly plant, and especially the teasel ("the more suffering is inflicted upon them, the higher they grow"). The MILK-thistle (*Silybum marianum*) with its white markings is associated with the mother's milk of the



Thistle. Hohberg, 1675

Virgin Mary and was used as a medicinal herb. Portraits of martyrs are often framed by thistle-shoots. The “Benedictine thistle” (*Cnicus benedictus*) is an old medicinal herb that was used under the name “cardobenedictine” or “cnicin” in treating internal disorders. In 1675 W. H. von Hohberg treated its symbolism in the following edifying verses: “Though cardobenedictine’s bitter/ And to the palate most unkind/ Yet still it doth the stomach good./ Thus though the word of God to ear severely rings/ ‘Tis soul’s well-being, sooth, eternal life it brings.” (See also FLOWERS, LANGUAGE OF.)

thorns and briars The symbolism and typology of the thorn-bush is determined by the following Bible verses: “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. . . . God called to him out of the midst of the bush . . .” [Exodus 3:2, 4] and summoned him to lead God’s people. Holy fire does not consume what it inflames, and Mary could become a MOTHER and yet have her VIRGINITY remain intact. Thus some altar paintings of the 15th and 16th centuries show Mary and the Christ-child in the Burning Bush. Thorny tendrils are also primarily associated

with Christ’s suffering under the CROWN of Thorns. Thorns play a role in the brutal self-mutilations of ancient Mexico: e.g., agave thorns were strung together and pulled through a hole in the tongue. Long-standing idioms illustrate vividly the immediate associations: “to fall among thorns” (i.e., into a life of sin), “a thorny question,” “to be a thorn in someone’s flesh,” “to sit on thorns.”

threshold Like the entire GATE or portal, the threshold, as a symbol of transition between inside and out, requires special rites and attention. In many cultures a tutelary spirit—who was under no circumstances to be trifled with—was believed to guard the threshold. The custom of carrying the bride over the threshold may have originated as an attempt to deceive this spirit, to make it believe that she had always lived there. The spirit had the power to keep out intruders, demons, and WITCHES. It is for him that the Japanese sprinkle SALT on the threshold (so that he will keep ghosts away); in Europe a PENTACLE was often carved in the threshold (or, in the Balkan regions, over the doorway). Jews affix a mezzuzah to the doorframe of their homes. A Jewish priest was to wear golden bells on the hem of his robe, “and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not” [Exodus 28:34–35]. Thus entrance and exit were to be clearly announced, lest supernatural powers be surprised. Dagon, the Philistine god of agriculture, had a TEMPLE in Ashdod whose threshold was not to be tread upon but stepped over [I Samuel 5:5; compare Zephaniah 1:9, with its warning against the pagan practice of leaping over thresholds].

The word “threshold” is frequently used figuratively to mark a moment of transition; the importance attached to such thresholds recalls both the tutelary spirits of which we have spoken and the “rites of passage” of ancient tradition, marking the attainment of adulthood.

In many traditions the entrances to shrines are flanked by statues of tutelary divinities



Thorns and briars: The bush burns but is not consumed. J. Boschius, 1702

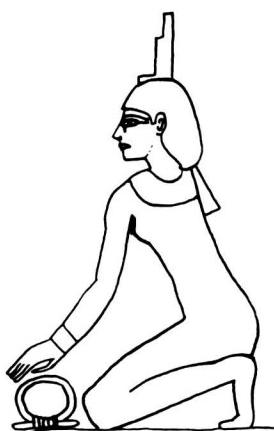
or of supernatural animals (see KARASHISHI, JANUS).

throne (from Greek *thronos*.) Every hierarchical society has used elevated, consecrated seats for its chieftain, KING, or EMPEROR, so that on official occasions the ruler could take a superior position (even when seated) to that of "mere mortals." The throne subsequently took on a symbolic value of its own; in many expressions it stands for the power of the ruler or realm. The so-called "throne of Minos" in Knossos (Crete) is especially famous. HOMER portrays gods, kings, and nobles on thrones. Empty thrones were sometimes maintained as seats for the gods, who were thought of as present but invisible. From the seventh century B.C. onward, Greek thrones were richly adorned, showing the influence of Middle Eastern cultures. Among the most famous thrones for the gods were those reserved for Zeus in Olympia (statue by Phidias) and Apollo in Amyclae. In Rome there were thrones for the emperor and for the goddess Roma; adorned with a crown and scepter, these thrones were themselves worshipped, as in the Hittite civilization of Asia Minor.

There are many passages in the Bible referring to God's throne. King SOLOMON, as God's deputy, "made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best GOLD" [I Kings 10:18]. Jesus promises his apostles that they will sit on 12 thrones and judge



Throne: King Ahiram of Byblos on sphinx throne. Stone relief, Phoenician, ca. 1100 B.C.



Throne: Isis wearing a symbolic throne. 15th century B.C.

the 12 tribes of Israel, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory" [Matthew 19:28]. In the Book of Revelation it is written: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" [20:11].

Peter's throne (*cathedra Sancti Petri*) is the symbol of the Papacy; bishops and abbots also had their thrones. In the symbolic art of the Eastern Church the motif of Christ riding a throne (*etimasia*) was a frequent emblem for Christ's return at the time of the Last Judgment.

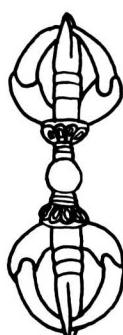
In civilizations outside Europe, the "peacock throne" of the Persian Shah, and, in Western Africa, the "golden throne" of the Ashanti, were especially famous.

thunder Understood in many ancient cultures as the powerful expression of creatures—usually gods—who dwelt in the HEAVENS; LIGHTNING was also attributed to them. The rumbling of the heavens was understood as a manifestation of power from above, in the Bible as the voice of God: "Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not



Thunder: Thunder-bird, stylized like the double eagle. Painting, Haida, Northwest U.S.

stay them when his voice is heard” [Job 37:2–4]. Thunder was often understood as an expression of divine wrath at a disturbance of cosmic order: among Native Americans as the beating of the wings of the thunder-bird; in Norse myth as the sound of Thor’s HAMMER Mjollnir (literally, “the pulverizer”), which the thunder-god hurled at the GIANTS. In ancient China thunder was perceived in a variety of ways: as “heaven’s laughter,” as supernatural drum-rolls, as the expression of a RED-haired sky-demon, or as the rumbling of a WAGON carrying the souls of the dead across the sky. Heavenly thunder gods were sometimes thought of as being one-legged: the Aztecs’ Tezcatlipoca, or the Quiché Mayas’ Huracán (from whose name our word “hurricane” is derived). In Central Europe belemnites, which are fossil remains of mollusks, are popularly known as “thunderbolts” or “thunderstones,” as were



Thunder: Vajra, thunderbolt. Lamaist ritual object, Tibet

also, in some areas, the Neolithic pickaxes placed by the *pater familias* under the ridge of the roof to ward off storm damage. Frequently the god of thunder, lightning, and the weather in general is also the supreme god of the heavens, like Zeus Ceraunus in ancient Greece, or, in Slavic traditions, Perun, whose symbol is a club. “Thunderbolt” (*vajra* or *rdo-rje*) is the name of a symbolic object used in Indian and Tibetan ritual, known also as the “DIAMOND-SCEPTER”; it is used in Tantric Buddhism to “split open ignorance and liberate knowledge.” It was originally the weapon of the Vedic sky-god Indra, with which he chopped up the clouds, freeing the RAIN. In Japanese iconography the thunder-god is the divinity Raijin, painted red and surrounded by eight tambourine-like drums. In general thunder is perceived as an impressive and concretely perceptible expression of heavenly powers, at times threatening us, at times protecting us from hostile entities. See also STORM.

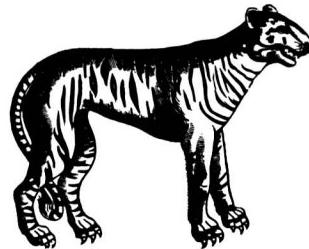
thrysus A characteristic staff associated with Dionysus (Latin *BACCHUS*), the god of intoxication and ecstasy who spread the cultivation of grapes for *WINE* from land to land. As their SCEPTER, Dionysus and his followers carried the thrysus, a staff wrapped in grape and ivy vines and crowned with a large pine-cone. Our other associations with Dionysus lend credence to the hypothesis that the thrysus is to be understood as a phallic symbol. It was originally the stalk of the giant fennel (Greek *narthes*, Latin *ferula*), whose natural height can extend to several yards. PROMETHEUS was said to have used this giant stalk to carry the SPARK from Mount Olympus that would bring FIRE to the human race. In schools it came to be used as a “rod” with which to discipline pupils.

tiara The Papal CROWN. In ancient Greek literature the term originally referred to the traditional felt HEADDRESS (shaped like a truncated cone) of the Persians, then especially to the crown of the Persian king, crenelated and adorned with STARS. Another form of the tiara is the miter, with

mouth covering, worn by Darius III in the Pompeian mosaic depicting his battle with ALEXANDER THE GREAT. The Phrygian cap—symbol, at the time of the French Revolution, of rule by the people—has been referred to as a sort of tiara. In the Middle Ages it came to designate the three-tiered crown of the Pope, a symbol of his “triregnum”: ruling over HEAVEN, EARTH, and the underworld, or the three classical continents Asia, Europe, and Africa (settled by the descendants of NOAH’s sons, Shem, Japheth, and Ham). Another explanation of the three rings of the Papal tiara is that they symbolize the Church suffering, doing battle, and triumphant. The form of this tiara was established in the time of Pope Urban V (d. 1370) but also used in depictions of earlier saints (e.g., Peter, Gregory I, SOPHIA). Popes who abdicated or saints who refused canonization are portrayed with the tiara beside them on the ground. The FIVE-tiered tiara is worn exclusively by God the Father in depictions of the Holy TRINITY.

tiger A predatory animal first known to the ancients of the Occident through ALEXANDER THE GREAT’s campaign to India. Its Greek name, *tigris*, goes back to the Iranian word *thigra* (“sharp, pointed”). Along with the PANTHER and the LYNX it appears as an attribute of the WINE god Dionysus (Latin BACCHUS); it also seems to have symbolic associations with the wind god Zephyr and with Cybele, the mother goddess of Phrygian myth (Asia Minor). The first tiger appeared in Rome in A.D. 19 as a gift to Augustus from an Indian delegation.

In ancient symbolism, the tiger appears naturally only in Asian traditions, where its



Tiger. From a drawing in E. Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, 1638

power inspired fear and wonder. Gods and heroes wear tiger skins, especially the fierce tutelary divinities of popular religions. In ancient China the third sign of the zodiac (corresponding roughly to Gemini) was named for the tiger. The animal was so revered that the Chinese avoided speaking its name, *hu*; they substituted for it such formulas as “the king of the MOUNTAINS” or “the giant reptile.” The tiger was esteemed because it drove off (or devoured) the wild boar that threatened the farmer’s crops. The tiger’s vitality and energy explain its association with yang; the white, or albino, tiger, however, is associated with yin (as well as autumn and the west). (“White tiger,” in Chinese, is also a term of opprobrium for a quarrelsome woman.) Even demons were said to fear tigers; this is why stone figures of tigers were often placed on grave markers. The image of a tiger on a door post was also believed to keep demons away from a dwelling. Tutelary gods were depicted riding on the backs of tigers. In South China there was a “were-tiger” tradition, according to which humans could be turned into tigers.

Medieval bestiaries praised the “motherly love” of the female tiger and noted that hunters routinely exploited her maternal instincts, placing a round MIRROR on the ground where she would look into it and mistake it for a tiger cub—which she would then attempt to nurse. (A similar ruse is proposed to save humans who are being pursued by a tigress.)

It is not clear whether the “manticore,” described by Pausanias and others as a fabulous monster, was in fact a tiger. The most



Tiger woman as siren in wait for male swimmers. Mogul painting. Bombay, ca. 1750

familiar literary tiger for Western readers is the one addressed in William Blake's *Song of Experience* (1794): "Tyger! Tyger! burning bright/ In the forests of the night. . . ."

Titanic The 45,000-ton ship, 270 meters (over 885 feet) in length, with 2201 persons on board—a "floating palace"—sank on April 14, 1912 after colliding with an iceberg in the North Atlantic, causing 1502 casualties. The most famous catastrophe at sea of the modern period, the sinking of the *Titanic* was interpreted as a "punishment" for the attempt to set records at whatever cost and for the presumption of those who worshipped "progress" and "technology" above all else. The sinking of the *Titanic* thus became a modern symbolic counterpart of the dramas of classical antiquity in which human hubris leads to divine retribution. The very name of the ship—which declares a total disregard for any "limits of growth"—helped to make the *Titanic* legendary. Decades later, the catastrophe continued to be the dramatized in books and films; it appears to have lost none of its macabre fascination.

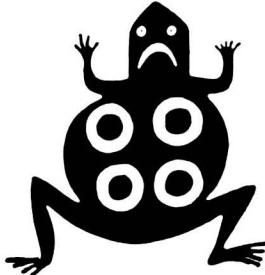
toads Having predominantly negative symbolic associations because of their unattractive appearance and their corrosive secretions, toads have been viewed most often as demonic creatures: members of witches' households, say, or part of the bill

of fare at a witches' feast, or tormenting the damned in the regions of HELL. In ancient China, the (three-legged) toad was a symbol of the MOON; it was believed that lunar eclipses were caused by a toad swallowing the moon. In other contexts as well the toad, because of its seclusion and fondness for dampness, is associated with the lunar realm, and in China with the principle of YIN. In Europe, from antiquity onward, the toad was on the one hand a despised creature, "full of evil magic," but on the other hand a symbol of the womb (see MOTHER), and women seeking relief from gynecological disorders often made votive offerings of statuettes of toads at places of PILGRIMAGE. In popular legend a toad is often the embodiment of a "poor soul" that has not yet attained salvation; thus, after the death of a person who has failed to carry out a vow, the person's soul must do so in the form of the despised animal, and can enter HEAVEN only when it has, say, crawled all the way to the altar at a shrine. In other legends the toad occasionally appears as the embodiment of maternally protective household spirits who must be catered to so that they will bless the house in return. There are also many legends in which toads guard TREASURES.

In the imagery of ALCHEMY, the toad symbolizes the watery, earthy part of the primal matter to be purified; it is to be united with the volatile (symbolized by the EAGLE), and this union is at times depicted with a winged toad. There is curious symbolism in the alchemistic allegory of a toad placed at a woman's BOSOM: as the text of an engraving in the book of emblems *Atalanta Fugiens* (1618) explains, "If you set a toad at the woman's breast, and let it be suckled and the woman die, then the toad will grow large from the milk." This strange depiction is related to the description of a (pseudo-) chemical process in which primal matter (on its way to becoming the philosopher's STONE) must be drenched (or "nursed") with "maiden's milk" (philosophical milk, the fluid of the moon). The growing "child" is indeed nursed by its mother, who dies in the process: this is called *ablactatio* ("weaning").



Toad nursed and weaned (alchemist's emblem). M. Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens*, 1618



Toad-like mythic creature. Native American ceramic, Mogollon, ca. A.D. 800

Alchemistic symbolism, as this case suggests, is rarely to be fully explained by rational means.

In ancient Mexico the earth was often represented by the toad, who lived on and dug beneath its surface. Poisonous secretions of toads may well have been used as consciousness-altering drugs. Frequently the toad (like the FROG), because of the conspicuous transformations in its life cycle, came to be associated with resurrection and rebirth, as prehistoric rock drawings of tadpole-like figures suggest.

tomahawk Many languages have expressions corresponding to the English “to dig up the tomahawk” (or “hatchet”), understood as the opposite of “to smoke the peace-pipe” (see CALUMET) or, of course, “to bury the tomahawk” (or “hatchet”). The tomahawk was a weapon (and tool) of the Native American peoples of Eastern and Central North America; this AX, which also had ritual and symbolic significance, was often painted and adorned with FEATHERS. Through the Leatherstocking novels of James Fenimore Cooper readers throughout the world became familiar with the custom of “burying the hatchet” upon the conclusion of peace.

In the 19th century white traders sold Native Americans a version of the tomahawk that had been combined with a tobacco pipe and had an iron blade. This tomahawk, like the calumet, often appears in 19th-century portraits of chiefs.

tongue (Greek *glossa*, Latin *lingua*) An organ of the body frequently symbolizing “language,” since it is critical for the articulation of most consonants. “To speak in foreign tongues” can refer to a mastery of foreign languages, or to xenoglossia, the paranormal ability to speak languages that one has not studied. In the mythology of ancient Egypt, “HEART and tongue” are the tools with which the god Ptah created the world: reason and language (i.e., the Creator’s “word”). There are maxims warning people against being led by the tongue alone.

In the Bible, the word “tongue” frequently refers to speech or language. “The tongue of the just is as choice SILVER” [Proverbs 10:20], or “Many have fallen by the sword, but not as many as by the tongue” [Sirach 28:18]. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in “cloven tongues like as of fire” and they “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterances” [Acts 2:3–4], the miracle of xenoglossia and the first Christian instance of this particular charism. “Speaking in tongues” is the ecstatic stammering of incomprehensible sounds (Greek *glossolalia*, a frequent practice in many charismatic churches. Similar speech was already attributed to the prophet Isaiah (the stammering Hebrew “*sau lasau, sau lasau, cau lacau, cau lacau, ze'er sham, ze'er sham*” of Isaiah 28:10; translated in the King James Version as “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”). Members of Pentecostal religions believe that these ecstatic utterances are divinely inspired, that they “speak with tongues of ANGELS.” (See also Acts 10:46, I Corinthians 12:10, 14:5, etc.)

In Christian iconography the tongue is an attribute of martyred saints whose tongues were cut out, e.g. John of Nepomuk (the



Tomahawk of the Missouris. 19th century



Tongue: St. John of Nepomuk with his tongue in his hand. W. Auer, 1890

patron saint of the seal of confession) and Emmeram of Regensburg, who was said to have preached even without a tongue. St. Hildegard of Bingen associated the tongue with the ELEMENT WATER: "The tongue as it forms words is like waters surging to the point of overflowing their banks. This shows that the soul, in its longing for heaven, strains against its physical confines to sing the praises of its creator."

"To speak with a forked tongue" is to use one's speech as treacherously as a SNAKE (which, it was once popularly believed, transmitted venom with its tongue)—perhaps the serpent of the Garden of Eden (see ADAM AND EVE, PARADISE).

A particularly gruesome form of self-torture practiced in ancient Mexico called for penitents to pull strings of THORNS through their tongues.

tooth Teeth often symbolize vitality, procreation, sexual potency, and sperm. In ancient legends, armed men grew out of soil sown with DRAGON's teeth. Teeth also had "occult significance" [Stemplinger]: when teeth were bared in a MIRROR, it was believed, the mirror darkened. North African Christians mocked or combatted IDOLS by baring their teeth at them, and "the first

baby tooth, if it does not touch the ground when it falls out, prevents genital pain. The tooth of a seven-year-old boy, set in gold or silver, prevents conception."

In Christian iconography St. Apollonia is usually portrayed with teeth and a pair of tongs, since her teeth were extracted as a part of her martyrdom. Through this association she became the patron saint of dentists.

In the symbology of dreams teeth are thought to have sexual associations: strong teeth, biting and chewing food, symbolize vitality, and "the urge to bite when making love is significant. The love for one's partner is so intense that one could 'just gobble him or her up.' Dreams of losing teeth . . . , like dental pain itself, have to do with sexual potency and impotence. Masturbation, above all, brings on dreams of losing teeth, as an expression of the sapping of energy" [Aeppli].

The Chinese believed that a person who dreamt of losing a front tooth would soon lose a parent. The gnashing of teeth was thought to keep ghosts away.

"Toothsome" means delicious, and, by extension, sexually attractive. A person "dressed to the teeth" (or "to the nines") is in his or her best attire.

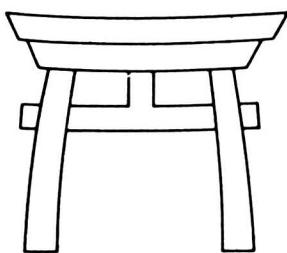
torch Symbolically and in ceremonies more than merely a source of LIGHT. The torch has a characteristic flame, flickering in a way that seems to bring its surroundings to life, and thus often carried in processions, demonstrations, and political rallies. Torches play a role in many mystic cults and were used, for example, in Mithraic ritual to symbolize life and death: next to the bull-slaying sun-god Mithra stand the spirits Cautes (Life, Light) with a raised torch and Cautopates (Death, DARKNESS) with a lowered torch. The extinguished torch symbolizing death, often in the hands of allegorical CUPIDS, appears frequently on old tombstones. In the Book of Revelation, seven torches are interpreted as symbols of the seven powers or spirits of God [4:5]. A torch is the attribute of martyrs who were tormented with fire (e.g., Theodotus, Eutro-



Torch. Hohberg, 1675

pia), and a dog with a torch in its mouth often appears with St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order (punningly interpreted as *domini canes*, “dogs of the Lord”). In Hohberg’s emblem-book (1675) the torch of divine wisdom sheds its light: “A traveler, forced the darkest night to brave,/ Sights torch’s shine and puts his cares to rest;/ So does God’s light his fold both guide and save,/ When darkness comes to put them to the test.” The fact that the torch’s flame appears to be alive made it a symbol of awakening, also in relays, where the torch’s FIRE has often been understood as almost sacred (“the torch is passed”)—although the athlete’s torch has generally been transformed into a sort of portable lantern. The most familiar torch today is the symbol of the Olympic Games.

torii The GATE to a Japanese shrine, constructed with a characteristic form and designating that one is entering holy ground. The torii is usually made of reddened wood or, less often, of STONE, although in recent



Torii: Yoke-shaped gate at entrance to many Japanese shrines

times concrete has also been used. The gate is often hung with intertwined rice straw, which is thought to have a purifying effect, keeping anything unclean from entering the temple grounds (*shimenawa*), and with strips of WHITE paper, which also symbolize purity. KARASHISHI usually stand at either side of the gate.

torque A necklace or collar customarily worn in Celtic cultures to designate that the wearer had attained manhood or was a warrior. Roman sculptures showing Celtic (Gallic) warriors in a variety of roles almost always include the torque, leaving little doubt as to its symbolic importance. It was not a closed RING but rather had an opening worn toward the front; the two ends were often adorned with heads of animals or stylized human faces. Archaeological excavations have revealed that, contrary to the impression given by ancient documents and works of art, warriors were not always buried with the torque. Gods and demigods—not only mortal members of the warrior caste—were portrayed with the torque.

totem In ethnology, a supernatural tutelary spirit or clan ancestor, usually represented in animal form. The term became more generally familiar through the totem POLES carved in TREE trunks by Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Kwakiutl). Most of them have an oval opening near the base, originally the entry to a ceremonial house (which, however, is rarely preserved). The carvings are depictions of the animals associated symbolically with the group in question and their myths—BEAR, RAVEN, EAGLE, killer WHALE, beaver—the creatures with which the group feels the deepest inner bonds. The carving and painting of totem poles often is of great artistic value. For many decades the poles were museum pieces, but with the recent revitalization of Native American culture they have been reintegrated into the spiritual life of members of the various nations.

Individual ethnic groups of ancient Egypt, later grouped in administrative districts, car-



Totem pole topped by raven. Haida nation, Pacific Northwest, 46 feet tall

ried sculptures of supernatural totemic animals (e.g., BULLS, COWS, ORYXES) on banner-like structures (poles with cross-beams); however, ethnologists have been unable to reconstruct the myths that led to the choice of individual animals.

In classical antiquity there were similar totemic animals for individual ethnic groups, "a vestige of the original animal fetishes" [Stemplinger]. Legends frequently recount how sacred animals showed the way to what were to become dwelling places or shrines. Apollo, for example, is said to have taken on the form of the RAVEN (one of his sacred creatures) and guided the inhabitants of the island of Thera (Santorini) to Cyrene around 630 B.C. Two ravens showed ALEXANDER THE GREAT the way to the shrine of Zeus Amun. When the inhabitants of Picenum went in search of a new homeland in the fourth century B.C., a woodpecker rode on their leader's FLAG. Aeneas and those colonizing Cyme were led by DOVES. The founders of Epidaurus followed a SNAKE, the Samnites a bull, the Hirpines a WOLF; a HARE pointed out the spot where the city of Boiai was to be established; a swarm of BEES

led the way to the CAVE where the oracle of the Boeotian demigod Trophonius was found. With totems, however, as with the occurrence in family names of words for animals, it is not always clear whether there is actually a powerful sense of attachment to the animal in question—and this same uncertainty extends to representations of real animals or mythical creatures in coats of arms (see HERALDRY, SYMBOLS IN). The creatures may simply be an encoding for positive characteristics (e.g., courage, strength, military preparedness) with which the bearers (of the arms in question) wished to associate themselves; hence the preference for such "royal" figures as the eagle or the LION.

tower A predominantly vertical structure, associated by the symbolist with the idea of an **AXIS MUNDI** linking **HEAVEN** and **EARTH**. The Biblical Tower of **BABEL (BABYLON)** is a mythical symbol of the hubris of our early ancestors, who believed that they could master even the heavens themselves. There are positive associations, however, with certain towers frequently depicted in the Christian tradition: the lighthouse, whose **LIGHT** guides the **SHIP** of life, or the citadel tower that protects the faithful against the forces of Satan. The **VIRGIN** Mary is referred to in litanies as the "Tower of David" or "a tower



Tower: "Eternally immovable." J. Boschius, 1702



Tower: Lighthouse. J. Boschius, 1702

of ivory," showing the way to heaven, as does the entire Church. In the early Christian text *Pastor Hermae* ("The Shepherd of Herma," ca. A.D. 140), the Church is likened to "a great tower over the water, made of splendid ashlars." Literal towers for churches were not built until the Middle Ages, when they served to make the sound of the BELLS resonate at a great distance. The earliest such structures were bell towers isolated from the sanctuaries.

The TAROT card "The LIGHTNING-Struck Tower" (French "La Maison-Dieu") in the Major Arcana—as lightning strikes, people plunge from the tower to the earth below—is interpreted as a reference to human presumption, as in the story of Babel.

In HERALDRY enclosed towers with pinnacles and gates appear frequently in the arms of cities, especially when the name of the city ends in "-burg" or "-bourg" (literally, "fortress"). According to the speculative interpretation of Böckler (1688), towers in the arms of families refer to strongholds that the founder of the line successfully either stormed or defended. "It is thus clear that the tower must designate persons of great merit."

As an attribute of saints, the tower is associated with Bernard of Aosta, Leocadia of Toledo, and Barbara (who was imprisoned

in a tower by her father). Towers as prisons appear frequently in fairy tales (e.g., "Rapunzel"), legend, and history (e.g., the Tower of London).

treasures The ones that play a major role in old tales of magic, spells, and adventure can be understood as "hoards" or "troves" from earlier eras, buried or hidden at a time of danger but then never retrieved by those who had left them behind. It was believed that they offered a relatively easy way to get rich—if one knew a few magic words and were willing to brave the curses attached to the treasures. There are many legends in which such treasures are almost recovered, only to sink back into the EARTH once more.

Viewed rationally, the search for buried GOLD had little prospect of success; the basis for such legendary quests may lie in symbolic traditions of late antiquity, like Gnostic doctrine, in which "treasures" stood for specific attainments sought on the path to wisdom and knowledge. Guardians block access to these inner treasures and can be commanded only by those who possess secret passwords and geometrical symbols—comparable, perhaps, to the mantras and MANDALAS of other cultures. Later traditions may be seen as literalizations of Gnostic doctrine by those with no understanding of its symbolic significance: the treasures become "real" hoards, but access to them continues to depend upon knowing the proper magic words and geometric forms.

tree Rooted in the EARTH but with their branches pointing to the HEAVENS, trees are, like humans themselves, creatures of two worlds, intermediaries between ABOVE AND BELOW. Not only were specific trees or an entire GROVE revered in many ancient civilizations as the abodes of supernatural beings (divinities, elemental spirits), but also the tree was widely seen as the AXIS MUNDI around which the cosmos is organized—for example, the world-tree Yggdrasil in Norse mythology, or the sacred ceiba or yaxché tree of the Yucatan Mayas, which grows in the center of the world and supports the layers of the sky: in each of the four regions



Tree of Knowledge (Eden) as death symbol. Colophon, Frankfurt, 1531

of the world one colored tree of this species serves as a corner-pillar for the heavens. The importance of forbidden trees in Eden is well known; for Buddhists the peepul or bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*) under which Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment, is the symbol of the "great awakening." Ancient Egypt venerated the sycamore, from out of which the goddess Hathor extended fortifying drink and nourishment to the souls (the mobile, winged *ba*) of the dead. The Sumerian god of vegetation, Dumuzi (Tammuz) was revered as the tree of life. For the ancient Chinese the PEAR and mulberry trees were sacred; for the Druids it was the OAK, which was also the sacred attribute of the

Germanic god of THUNDER and the (Greek) king of the gods, Zeus. Sacred trees of this sort are found among virtually all ancient peoples, to some extent real trees occurring in nature, to some extent trees idealized into cosmic symbols.

In Christian iconography the tree symbolizes life lived in accordance with God's plan: its annual cycle refers to life, death, and resurrection: a barren or dead tree, to the sinner. The Tree of Knowledge is believed to have provided the wood for Christ's cross, thus making it from then on, for the believer, the Tree of Life. It was frequently depicted with branches and leaves or likened to the family tree of the "root of Jesse." Tree symbolism and reverence for trees carry some trace, finally, of the natural religion of old, in which trees were not merely a source of wood but the abode of nymphs, and entities to which humans related emotionally. Trees with saints' images on their trunks (called "forest devotions" in Austria) go back to this, as does the Christmas tree, today an almost universal symbol, consoling us in mid-winter with the prospect of greening and rebirth.

Above all, the Virgin Mary was seen as the "tree of life," blessed by the Holy Ghost, and giving the world its fruit, the Savior. Through this association, old village shrines, places of pilgrimage, seem to carry into the present the tradition of "sacred trees": Triple-Oaks of Our Lady, Mary's Green, the Mary Linden, and so forth; Bishop Ezzo of



Tree of the planets with two alchemists. Basilius Valentinus, Azoth, 1659



Tree-like drawings and ships. Rock drawings, Sweden, Bronze Age

Bamberg celebrated the Cross as a tree of blessings: "Your bough did heaven's burden bear. Your fruit is sweet and good, sublime the blood upon you there." Throughout the Christian Occident we find legends of dead trees, branches, or sticks that turned green again as a sign of God's grace. Medieval sculptures of the Cross as a tree, with the beginnings of branches, are related to this symbolism of resurrection, an association suggested by the way the new growth of spring follows defoliation and winter's repose.

A Jewish legend recounts that the progenitor ABRAHAM planted trees everywhere he went, but that they did not thrive; only one, in the land of Canaan, shot up tall. Through it Abraham could tell whether someone believed in the true God or was an idolator. Over the believer the tree would spread its branches and offer its SHADE for protection, but not over the idolator, from whom the tree would turn aside, refusing shade, stretching its branches upward. Abraham, however, did not forsake the idolators but rather sought to convert them. "By eating from the Tree of Knowledge Adam brought death into the world. But when Abraham came, he healed the world by means of another tree." The legend of the tree that brings redemption may be a transposition, into the world of the Old Testament, of the Christian symbolic tradition of the tree of the Cross. The early Christian text *Physiologus* tells of the Indian tree Peridexion, on whose fruit DOVES feed eagerly but which the SNAKE cannot come near, fleeing even the shadow that the tree casts. The tree is a reference to the Savior, the "true tree of life," whose fruit sustains believers but which the DEVIL cannot approach. In medieval bestiaries this tree is called Perindens; it protects the doves that live in its shade from the DRAGON. "The heavenly fruit of the tree is the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, wisdom that we are given in the sacraments" [Unterkircher].

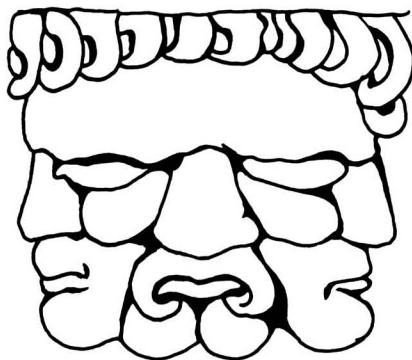
An antitype of the trees of paradise restored appears in Islamic mythology as the zaqqum-tree, whose foliage and fruit feed the condemned sinners and blasphemers after

the final judgment. "Its thorny branches and bitter fruit will swell up in their bodies like molten ore" [Beltz, 1980]. The garden of the new paradise is filled with shade-trees with delicious fruit, of which the just and faithful may eat. Another tree in the Islamic religious tradition is the world-tree, on whose leaves the name of every person is written; Israfil, the ANGEL of death, gathers the leaves that fall by Allah's will and fetches from the earth those who are destined to die. See also DEATH, SYMBOLS OF, and FIG, SIGN OF THE.

triads Along with triadic structures of female mythical figures, characteristic of classical antiquity and its conceptual world. There seems to have been a more pronounced desire to see powerful female divinities in threes than was the case for their male counterparts: consider the GRACES, the HORAE, the FATES, the GORGONS, the Graeae, the FURIES. Even the number of the NINE MUSES suggests a structure of three-times-three. Later mythologists attempted to interpret the goddess of the night and magic, Hecate, as a triadic figure (girl, woman, crone), which is not unequivocally supported by classical sources. (See SPINNING.) In south-central Europe at the time of the Romans three MOTHERS (*materes*, *matronae*, *matrae*) were revered; cults of similar female



Triad in Hindu iconography: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva with linga. Ca. A.D. 500



Triad: A god with three faces. Gallo-Roman, Reims

triads carried over into alpine regions in the form of the worship of legendary female saints, the three "Beths," with names like "Ainbeth, Wilbeth, and Warbeth" (or Catherine, Barbara, and Lucia; there were many variants). The symbolism of the female triad may also have influenced the Norse myth of the three Norns, spinning human destiny like the Fates of the Greeks. The Hindu Trimurti shows a triadic organization, portraying jointly Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu, in a way that has often been likened to the Christian Trinity. Its roots in intellectual history, however, involve the efforts of Indian theologians to bridge the widening gap between followers of Shiva and of Vishnu. The Buddhist notion of knowledge (*bodhi*) as the *tri-kaya* ("three bodies") is composed of *dharma-kaya* (true being), *nirmana-kaya* (the earthly mode, Gautama Buddha), and *sambogha-kaya*, the blessed functioning of the community of believers. From this is derived the symbolic

image of the "three jewels" (*tri-ratna*): law, Buddha, and community, which are interpreted in Jainism as "right conduct," "right faith," and "right knowledge." In the imagery of ALCHEMY, the division of the world into *corpus*, *anima*, and *spiritus* (body, soul, spirit; also, salt, SULFUR, AND MERCURY) is often portrayed with three figures (often disguised by symbols of the TRINITY). (See also BLACK.)

triangle One of the simplest of geometrical symbols; at its origin it represented the first possibility of enclosing an area, and creating a figure, with straight lines. For this reason, not every triangle has symbolic significance. Archaeologists found Stone Age masonry made of triangularly applied flagstones at the Lepenski Vir site on the Danube (seventh millennium b.c.); triangular bone-carvings are even older. There is a wide variety of interpretations for this symbol. The female pubic triangle is most frequently mentioned, with its apex pointing downward and, in some cases, a vertical line beginning at that apex. In later civilizations triangles appear frequently in designs on ceramics, those pointing downward traditionally interpreted as WATER-symbols (suggesting the direction of falling rain) and those pointing upward, as FIRE-symbols (the direction of the flame). The two triangles superimposed form a complete DUALITY, the six-pointed star (HEXAGRAM, Star of David). A triangle is also inscribed at times in the conjurer's magic CIRCLE. The triangle can also be used in place of the trefoil (three-leaf CLOVER), as a sort of euphemism for this masculine symbol. In the system of the Pythagoreans, the Greek letter delta, with its triangular form, was the symbol for cosmic birth, and similarly in Hinduism for the female, life-giving deity Durga. In the early Christian period the Manicheans used the triangle as a symbol of the TRINITY, which led St. Augustine (A.D. 354–430) to reject its use for this purpose. It did subsequently prevail as a symbol for the Trinity (the hand, head, and name of God, complemented by an EYE), signifying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; this "God's-



Triad: Sirens. Cartari, 1647



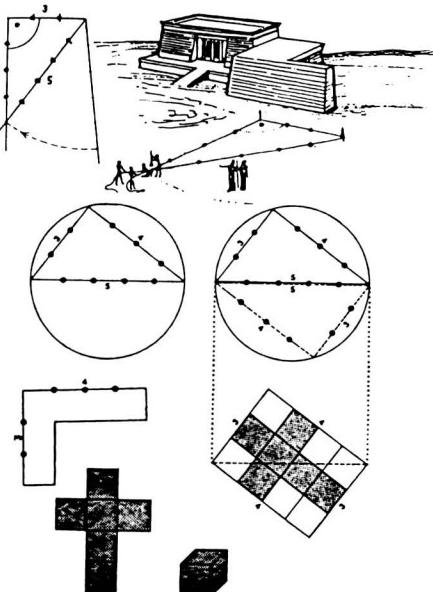
Triangle: The sign Hrungnir's Heart. Gotland (Sweden), Viking era

eye" in the triangle was particularly frequent in the baroque period, and in the symbology of FREEMASONRY this "all-seeing eye," with nine beams emanating from it, is also a symbol of the Godhead. In the Cabala the Book of Zohar ("splendor") contains the sentence: "In heaven God's two eyes and his forehead form a triangle, and their reflection forms a triangle in the waters." In pre-Christian times the philosopher Xeno-crates (339–314 b.c.) had viewed the equilateral triangle as "divine," the isosceles as "demonic," and the scalene as "human" (imperfect).

Arthur Koestler portrays the fascination of number harmony in the context of the proportions of the right triangle, as eluci-

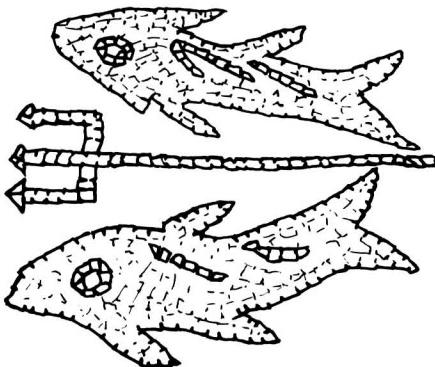
dated by PYTHAGORAS (sixth century. B.C.): "There is no apparent relationship between the lengths of the sides of a right triangle; but if we construct a square on each side, the combined area of the smaller squares is exactly equal to the area of the largest. If such wonderfully ordered laws, previously invisible to the human eye, could be discovered by plunging into numerical formations, were there not grounds to hope that under mathematical examination the universe would soon reveal all of its secrets?" (1959). In the light of the symbolic associations already mentioned, FREEMASONRY also found significance in the Pythagorean right triangle with its sides of three, four, and five units, respectively; it appears, with squares constructed on the three sides, on Masonic instructional tapestries, and is referred to simply as the "Pythagoras." As "Euclid's 47th problem" it is the symbol of the "Master of the Lodge" and the insignia of the past-master.

In ancient China the triangle is a "female symbol" but is not the subject of great speculation. In Tibetan Tantrism the hexagram, as the combination of two equilateral triangles, symbolizes the "penetration of femininity by male fire." In the illuminated manuscripts of ancient Mexico a triangle resembling a capital A is the symbol for "year." In Occidental art triangular composition was frequent in both architecture and painting, especially where subjects relating to the Trinity were being addressed.



Triangle: Egyptian sailmakers construct a Pythagorean triangle; a geometry lesson

trident A fishing spear with three barbed prongs, is the symbol and attribute of the sea-god Poseidon (Latin Neptune). As a piece of fishing apparatus it occasionally appears in coats of arms, e.g. on the flag of Barbados. In Hindu symbolism the trident refers to the god Shiva, i.e., to his three aspects (creation, being, destruction) or to his past, present, and future. Worshippers of Shiva paint the sign of the trident on their foreheads as a visible symbol. The ancient Indian FIRE-god Agni (cognate of Latin *ignis*, "fire"), who rides a RAM, also holds a trident in his hand.



Trident and fish. Floor mosaic, House of Fish, Ostia, 4th century A.D.

Trinity (from the Latin *trinitas*; also Holy Trinity) A theological concept of great symbolic import, and not to be confused with TRIADS or triadic structures in general. The Trinity is the doctrine of unity of God in three persons—God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost)—formulated at the time of the confrontation with Arianism (Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325). In the Occident it led to the doctrine of “tritheism,” espoused by Roscelin of Compiègne and declared heretical in 1092. In the fine arts the Trinity was first portrayed by three persons sitting side by side, but after the tenth century it was forbidden to represent the Holy Spirit in human form. He was replaced by the figure of the DOVE, or the Trinity, following classical prototypes, was portrayed as a body whose head had three faces, or by a head whose three faces blended in with one another. A TRIANGLE with its apex pointing upward and “God’s eye” inside it, is another symbol of the Trinity. For the Jungian school of analytic psychology the trinity is a masculine symbol that the doctrine of the (physical) Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (officially proclaimed on November 1, 1950) augmented to form a quaternity (see FOUR), the archetype of totality and perfection (see SQUARE). Other traditional symbols of the Trinity include three overlapping CIRCLES, three arcs enclosed by a circle, the three-leaf clover, the tau CROSS with three arms

of equal length, the Y-shaped “fork”-cross, three tendrils on a grapevine (see WINE), a pair of SCALES with three weights, three HARES whose ears form a triangle, or three FISH, LIONS, or EAGLES with a common head. In portrayals of the “Seat of Grace,” God the Father appears as a BEARDED man, holding in his arms the Cross with Christ upon it, as the Holy Spirit hovers overhead in the form of a dove. The Quaternity (including Mary), often understood as the coronation of the Mother of God, was a frequent subject of sacred art from the mid-15th century onward. The old portrayal of God with three faces was forbidden and declared heretical by Pope Urban VIII in 1628, but



Trinity as three suns, equilateral triangle, rainbow. J. Boschius, 1702



Trinity of body, soul, and spirit in alchemy. *Rosarium Philosophorum*, 1550

many such portrayals survive from the Middle Ages. The reason for this prohibition was Protestant ridiculing of such images as "Catholic Cerberuses" (see DOG).

triskelion A design dividing a CIRCLE into three parts, not unlike its division into four by the bent arms of a SWASTIKA. Triskelions appear, for example, on prehistoric earth-ware vessels of the late Bronze Age, and triadic structures of SPIRALS adorn the walls



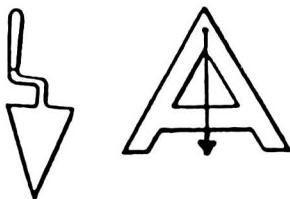
Trinity. Rustic altar panel, Tyrol, ca. 1600

of Irish megaliths—surely with symbolic intent and not as mere decoration. There are also triskelions formed from three human legs bent at the knee, e.g. on Pamphylian coins or in the arms of the city of Agrigento (Sicily). Armored legs in this configuration appear in the arms of the Isle of Man, with the motto "*Stabia quocunque ieceris*" ("It will stand erect, wherever it is thrown"). The arms of the city of Füssen (Bavaria) also contain three legs. As in the case of the swastika, the triskelion is associated with rotation. The form of three overlapping circles, frequently found in the WINDOWS of Gothic churches, is associated with the Holy TRINITY. Medieval stained-glass windows often portray three rabbits or HARES chasing one another, with their ears meeting at the center to form a TRIANGLE.



Triskelion in Celtic art; triadic structure.

trowel A mason's tool significant in the symbology of FREEMASONRY, especially in references to those who have already completed their "apprenticeship" and are "brothers" (the "journeymen") of the order (but not yet "masters"): the "STONE" has already been "hewn," and the trowel serves to apply the "mortar" (binding work that secures the brother within the fraternity). While the other symbolic tools of this system are more those of the stonemason than of the "mason" in the present-day sense, the trowel is actually used to bind "building blocks" together: this is also its symbolic role in the building of the symbolic "TEMPLE" of Freemasonry. In some versions of Masonic doctrine, the trowel—which can be used to "wall up" or seal off an area—



Trowel and level, Masonic symbols of the work of the Lodge

signifies the injunction of secrecy to be maintained with respect to outsiders (the "profane") in order to guarantee the "arcanum," i.e., the secret (enclosed, as it were, in a "chest" [in Latin, *arcu*]) of the validity and significance of Masonic symbols and rituals as personally experienced by the "brothers" of the fraternity.

Miniature GOLD and SILVER trowels serve to commemorate gatherings of Masonic brothers. Baurnjöpel mentions that officers of the lodge wear a trowel and a KEY "over their hearts . . . the former of the purest, brightest gold, and the latter made of ivory." (1793).

trumpet A horn capable of producing a single pitch, derived from the ancient Jewish shofar (a RAM'S HORN), which was sounded during marches through the desert, when enemies were approaching, when God ap-



Trumpet: Fall of Jericho. Detail, Luther Bible, Wittenberg, 1682

peared to Moses on Mount Sinai, or to announce the freeing of slaves in the year of "jubile" [Leviticus 25:8–17]. Tradition also has it that the shofar was a reminder of the ram that God commanded Abraham, the ancestral father of the Jewish people, to sacrifice in place of his son Isaac [Genesis 22:1–14]. It was said that only those of the Jewish faith could produce sounds from the horn. The shofar brings forth "lasting, calling, broken, resounding, pealing, or mournful sounds, in a specific order" [de Vries, 1986] and is still blown on the Jewish New Year as ordained in Numbers 29:1.

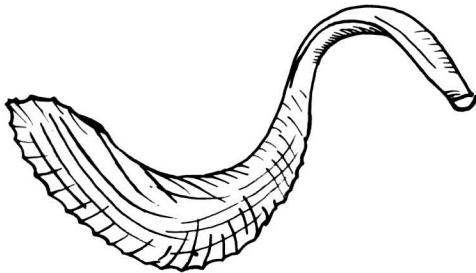


Trumpet: Horn players with helmets. Cave drawings, Scandinavia, Bronze Age

A great trumpet, it is said, will announce the reuniting of the lost and the exiled. Christian depictions of the Last Judgment follow the Book of Revelation, and ANGELS blow trumpets to announce the END OF THE WORLD; this tradition, and the use of bugles in the military, are behind the use of "trumpet" as a verb meaning to spread news.

In the Bronze Age large curved horns apparently played a role in the religious practice of Northern Europe; they are also depicted in the prehistoric cave drawings of the period.

turquoise A BLUE-GREEN gemstone that symbolizes in Western tradition, according to its coloration, either the planet JUPITER (green) or VENUS (blue); the turquoise is the birthstone of those born under the sign of Sagittarius. The name of the STONE refers to the notion that it is of Turkish or Middle Eastern origin. It was thought to protect rulers from evil influences.



Trumpet: Shofar, made from twisted ram's horn, blown on Rosh Hashanah

In ancient Mexico, also, the turquoise (in Aztec, *xihuitl*) was one of the most admired gemstones; only JADE was more valued. Turquoise mosaics adorned the DIadem of the KINGS and their ornamental shields. The FIRE god was called "Lord of the Turquoise" (*Xiuhtecutli*)—the sky-blue turquoise symbolizing the unity of heavenly (i.e., solar) and earthly FIRE. He was adorned with the "turquoise serpent" (*Xiuhtcoatl*), which also constituted his "alter ego"; the Aztec king was considered to be his earthly counterpart.

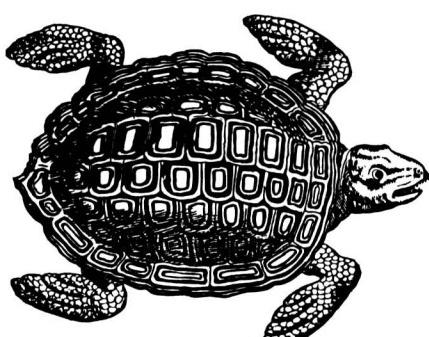
turtle For the psychologist, a symbol of quiet strength and the possibility of taking refuge from any external attack. "It retains about it something of the age-old hush of life constantly able to withdraw into itself at the approach of danger" [Aeppli]. The turtle plays such a role, for example, in the highly symbolic novel *Momo* by Michael Ende. In ancient Chinese cosmology we find mention of the primordial Ao, a sea-turtle of cosmic dimensions: it carries the world on its back. Stone sculptures of turtles, with armored backs, were believed to preserve the stability of the cosmos. There was said to be an Ao-shan (Ao mountain) on the ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED. Ao itself was said to be a fire-eater, and an Ao figure on the roof was thought to protect a house against FIRE. In the Chinese system of symbolic analogies, Ao was one of the five sacred animals, specifically associated with the north, WATER, and winter. In the earliest periods of Chinese civilization, bits of turtle shell were used in augury, apparently because the

number of peripheral sections (24) corresponded to the number of divisions in the agrarian calendar. Because of the great age it attained, the turtle served as a symbol for longevity; because of its imperviousness to attack, as a symbol for universal order which nothing could dislodge. At the same time the turtle also had negative associations: it was believed that all turtles (*kui*) were female, that they could reproduce only by mating with SNAKES, and that they had no sense of shame (*kui* also being the word for "penis"). The positive associations, however, were predominant.

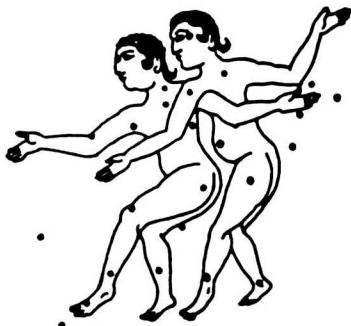
In European antiquity the turtle, because it produced so many EGGS, was a symbol of fertility; because of its "quiet reserve," chaste love; because of its long life, unwavering vitality. In patristic writings, the turtle, living in mud, came to symbolize all that is earth-bound; St. Ambrose (ca. 340–397), however, pointed out that the shell of the turtle could be used to make a seven-stringed instrument whose music gladdened the hearts of all who heard it. Even in ancient times the protective function of the shell was exploited symbolically in magic rituals (to ward off hail and black magic); turtle EYES set in GOLD served as an amulet against the "evil eye." In Aesop's fable, the patience of the tortoise enables it to "outrun" the HARE.

In the art and mythology of ancient Mexico, as well, turtles are of considerable importance. (Sea-turtles, for example, are the mounts of mythical ancestors.)

In India the turtle was the second embodiment (*avatara*) of the god Vishnu.



Turtle: Sea turtle. C. Gesner, *Nomenclator*, Zürich, 1650



Twins: Arabian portrayal of the constellation Gemini.
El Sufi, A.D. 1009

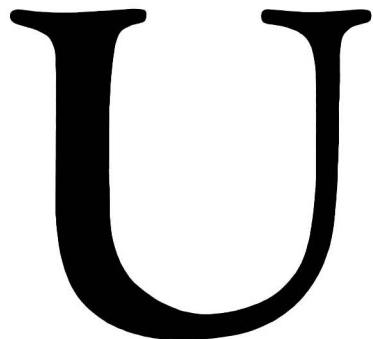
twins In some cultures, considered regrettable accidents of nature; often one of them is killed at birth, in some cases because it is supposed (in parts of West Africa, for example) that the two have committed a sort of incest in the mother's womb. In Native American myths they represent a DUALITY of good and evil. In other traditions twins are greatly esteemed, as in the case of the Greek and Roman myths of Castor and Pollux (Greek Polydeuces). The rulers of the island kingdom of Atlantis, according to Plato's account, are also twins: ATLAS and Gadirus (the demigod for whom the city of Gades [Cádiz] was named), Ampheres and Eudemon, Mneseus and Autochthon, Elasippus and Mestor, Azaes and Diaprepes. These may refer not to "real" sets of twins

but to the ancient custom (also observed by the first inhabitants of the Canary Islands [see ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED]) of two KINGS sharing a single throne. According to Robert Graves, this arrangement was also known in Mycenaean Greece. In addition to Castor and Pollux (Sparta), Idas and Lynceus ruled in Messina, Proetus and Acrisius in Argos, Heracles (Hercules) and Iphicles in Tiryns, and Eteocles and Polynices in Thebes.

Twins are often so portrayed as to symbolize dually opposed temperaments. One is soft, passive, and introverted; the other, dynamic, bellicose, extroverted. Or one is mortal, the other immortal. In other cases, they complement each other perfectly, forming an invincible duo so dangerous to the cosmic order that they must be eliminated from the world of the living.

The third sign of the zodiac (see STARS) is Gemini ("the twins," May 22–June 21), an "air sign" associated with duality, separation, contradiction, similarity, duplication, repeated actions, and the like. The constellation is named for the stars Castor and Pollux, which are of almost equal brightness.

In ancient China twins of different sexes were an unlucky omen. They were said to constitute a "ghostly couple" and were generally not allowed to live. A pair of male twins, on the other hand, was sometimes viewed as a divine recognition of great piety.



UFO, or unidentified flying object In the view of many authors, especially those writing in the 1960s, spaceships bringing intelligent visitors from other planets or solar systems—superior beings who contemplate life on earth with grave concern and contemplate constructive intervention. Some psychologists, on the other hand, believe that the supposed sightings and ensuing interpretations are mere visions—an updating (for the technical age) of the traditional notion of guardian ANGELS: symbols of a yearning for help from “heaven” to eliminate (or at least reduce) the existential distress of humanity. The angel of yore has now become a UFO. It should be noted that in recent times, since space flights and the various possibilities for investigating outer space have virtually eliminated the possibility of extraterrestrial life, the number of UFO sightings has been reduced almost to zero, just as the general interest in cosmic phenomena on the part of the general population has greatly diminished. In earlier times people looking at comets saw heavenly swords and rings of fire, “signs from heaven”; similarly, UFO’s, in the years following the middle of the 20th century, symbolized the hope for an intervention from on high (see ABOVE/BELOW)—a hope manifested also in books and motion pictures, and an extraordinary symptom of the times.

unicorn A fabled creature important in ancient and medieval symbology, usually portrayed as a WHITE DEER with a HORSE’s mane, cloven hoofs, and a SPIRAL HORN growing out of its forehead. It seems to have its origin in the writings of the Greek historian Ctesias (ca. 400 b.c.), who refers to a wild animal whose single horn has healing powers—presumably a misunderstanding of descriptions of the Indian rhinoceros. Cattle breeders can also produce one-horned BULLS by surgical means: the calf’s dermal bumps (papillae), from which two horns would normally grow, are made to overlap, then heal, and grow together. Rhinoceros horn was valued for enhancing potency, and the horn apparently is of phallic significance. In Occidental iconography, however, the horn is still shown as growing out of the unicorn’s forehead; thus what was originally a symbol of sexuality is associated with the intellect. The unicorn indeed became a symbol of purity and strength, and medieval miniatures and tapestries show that it could be caught only with the aid of a VIRGIN, in whose lap the trusting animal seeks refuge, whereupon it is caught by hunters and killed. This is seen as a symbol of the Virgin Mary’s conception of Christ, and of the subsequent crucifixion of the Savior. Gabriel, the ANGEL of the Annunciation, is sometimes portrayed as a hunter, driving the “precious unicorn” to the Virgin, with the help of his dogs, who are named either “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” or “Truth, Righteousness, Peace, and Mercy,” for the cardinal virtues. Mary, meanwhile, sits in an enclosed garden (*hortus conclusus*) or in a rose-arbor (as in tapestries at the Musée Cluny in Paris). The Christian interpretation of the unicorn goes back to ancient myths and early Christian instructional texts, which were subsequently adapted and illustrated in medieval bestiaries. There are frequent references to the efficacy of the horn as an antidote to poison; ground up, it was said to heal wounds quickly. Such horns (in truth tusks of the narwhal, a North Atlantic sea mammal, *Monodon monoceros*, imported from the waters off Iceland and Greenland) were displayed not



Unicorn of ancient Chinese tradition. Stone relief, ca. 100 B.C.

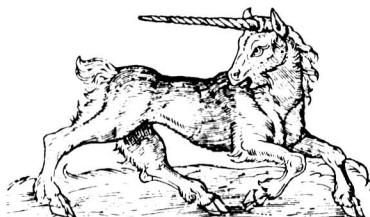
only in Renaissance collections of curios but also in pharmacies. The early Christian *Physiologus* describes as follows the power of the horn to counter the effects of poison: before the other animals come to drink, "the snake comes forward and spits its venom into the water. The animals, however, knowing that the water is poisoned, do not dare to drink. They await the unicorn. The unicorn comes, goes right into the lake and makes a cross with its horn. This removes the effect of the poison. Only after the unicorn has drunk do the other animals approach and do likewise." This is clearly a mythical transformation of the belief in the wondrous power of the rhinoceros' horn. In the medieval collection *Gesta Romanorum*, incidentally, the ELEPHANT takes what is otherwise the role of the unicorn: a king, wishing to hunt one down, is said to have ordered two beautiful virgins to go into the forest naked and

sing lullabies; the elephant fell asleep in the lap of one of them, the other killed it with a SWORD, and the king dyed a cape in its BLOOD. It is not clear what animal is meant in the Bible by the Hebrew word *re'em*. Although it is probably a wild buffalo, the word is translated "unicorn" (Greek *monoceros*), as in Psalm 22:21: "Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." The Chinese unicorn (*ky-lin*, *ch'i-lin*) bears little resemblance to either.



Unicorn ridden by a savage. Antique playing card ("Vogel-Unter") by Meister E. S.

Unicornis ein Einhorn.



Unicorn. From C. Gesner's *Historia Animalium*, Zürich, 1551

blance to its European counterpart: it can best be described as a deer-like animal with scales, an oxtail, and a furry horn on its forehead. It stands for happiness and blessedness, especially being blessed with male offspring. Portrayals of the gentle goddess Kuan-yin towering over a reclining unicorn are reminiscent of the Occidental pairing of virgin and unicorn. In the imagery of ALCHEMY the unicorn is a symbol for the primal essence mercury, which is to be joined with the LION, SULFUR, in a higher unity. In HERALDRY the unicorn, as a bearded horse with cloven hoofs and a spiral horn, appears only rarely within the shield itself (e.g., of the Austrian city of Bludenz), but often as a supporter, along with the lion, as in the arms of Great Britain.



Uroborus around Demogorgon, god of time. Cartari, 1647



Uroborus. Etching on bronze vessel, China, Chou dynasty, ca. 1200 B.C.



Uroborus around young sun god: Symbol of (circular) course of time. Ancient Egypt

uroborus A SNAKE biting (or “swallowing”) its own tail. This symbolic image (found in a great variety of cultures) presents in animal form the circle as an embodiment of “eternal return” and suggests that for—indeed, *in*—every end there is a new beginning, in a cycle of endless repetitions. Along with the symbolic associations already present in the “constantly rejuvenated” snake, the “closing of the circle” through its body offers an expressive metaphor for cyclical repetition, for the sequence of “ENDS” OF THE WORLD and restorations of it, for death



Uroborus, Greek text: “The One is everything.” Codex Marcianus, Venice, 11th century



Uroborus as two-headed, winged dragon. Illustration, 12th century codex, British Museum

and rebirth—and, by extension, for eternity (like the simple circle). In the symbolism of ALCHEMY, the uroborus symbolizes a closed, cyclical process in which the heating, evaporation, cooling, and condensation of a liq-

uid helps to refine or purify substances. In this uroborus the single snake is often replaced by two creatures, each biting the tail of the other, the upper one a winged DRAGON (a symbol of volatility).

V

Valkyries (Old Norse *valkyrjar*, “choosers of the slain”) Figures in Old Norse mythology associated with the honorable death of warriors. They are handmaidens of the god Odin, who is seeking brave soldiers from earthly battles—those, precisely, who have no fear of death—to become his comrades in the great battle Ragnarök at the end of time (see *END OF THE WORLD*). The Valkyries ride through the clouds on swift HORSES, snatching up the elect and carrying them off to Valhalla, Odin’s AFTERLIFE home for the valiant. In the *Edda*, the names of the Valkyries include Skuld (the last of the NORNS, who brings death), Brünnhilde, Göll (“she who calls out”), Gondul (“she-wolf”), Hrist (“storm”), Mist, and Thrud (“force”). Those who have fallen in battle and been borne off to Valhalla are called *einherjar* (“individual combatants”); they face one another daily in training matches, then every evening carouse together unwounded. The entire myth of the Valkyries expresses on one hand the great prestige attached to death in combat (not unlike the Aztec celebration of death on the field of battle or the sacrificial altar) and on the other hand a fearless anticipation of the great battle at the end of time—in which all the gods and their adjutants must fall, and after which a new era can begin, a version of PARADISE lived out in “Gimle” in the southern sky.

The Valkyrie Brünnhilde has become most familiar, playing a tragic role in the Song of the Nibelungs and bringing about the ruin of

the hero SIEGFRIED, who has won her hand for King Gunther. Brünnhilde is always thought of as “robust,” and it is this quality which has become proverbial.

Vandals The name of a Germanic people from the period of the great migrations; in modern usage, it ascribes senseless destruction by the Vandals of old and their present-day imitators. The historical Vandals first settled by the rivers Oder and Vistula, divided into two groups, the Asdings and the Silings (for which “Silesia” is named). When the time of the great migrations came, the Silings wandered long and far, then settled in 411 in the south of Spain. (The name “Andalusia” may be a corruption of “Vandalusia.”) There they learned seafaring and were soon led by their king Geiserich to North Africa (429); in 439 they conquered Carthage and founded an empire there. From Carthage they undertook “Viking raids” in the Mediterranean area, and in 455, they unexpectedly defeated the utterly unprepared city of Rome. “The plundering went on for a fortnight. But there was no wanton destruction, and the lives of the populace were spared. . . . In comparison with the horrible defeat of Carthage in 146 B.C., the sacking of Rome was relatively mild, and involved no real violations of accepted military procedures of the time. The word ‘vandalism’ was first used by the French bishop Grégoire of Blois in 1794 to describe the



Vandal coin portraying King Gunthamund (d. A.D. 496). North Africa



Veiled bride. Turkish miniature, 17th century

savage destruction that characterized the French Revolution, which he likened to the sacking of Rome in 455. But he gave the Vandals a notoriety that they hardly deserved. The carrying off of the spoils of war, mostly from public property, was accepted practice, observed especially by the Romans themselves when they were the victors" [Nack]. Under Geiserich's great-grandson Gelimer the North African empire of the Vandals collapsed, and the territory was restored to Roman rule. The Vandal captives were not executed but integrated into the Roman army and thus scattered over the provinces of the dissolving empire.

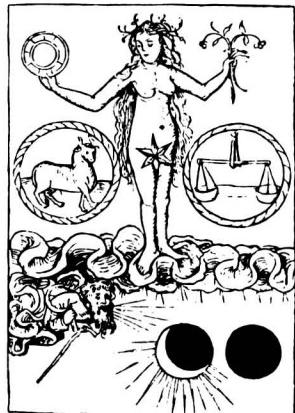
veil A partly transparent covering for the face, generally a symbol of modesty, virtue, and withdrawal from the outside world. In earlier times women and girls wore veils to church to indicate their removal from the vanities of this world. Nuns were veiled in public (hence the expression "to take the veil" for entry into cloister life). The veil was commonly worn at court in the Middle Ages and survives in the veils of bride and widow. In Muslim countries women are required to be veiled in public so as not to arouse the desires of male strangers. On the other hand, it is customary among the Tuaregs of the Central Sahara that men veil their faces, a practice presumably originating as protection against sand storms.

Fog and cloud cover are often referred to as veils. Both the noun and the verb are used in extended senses to refer to intentional (if at times partial) concealment (e.g., "thinly veiled references"). The veil is the attribute both of St. Ludmilla, who was strangled with one, and of Margravine Agnes of Austria: in fulfillment of a sacred vow, St. Leopold founded the cloister Klosterneuburg on the spot where Agnes' veil was found after it had been carried off by the wind.

Venus (Greek Aphrodite) The PLANET, originally referred to as a STAR—"the" morning, or evening, star, and yet one that is never above the horizon at midnight; this "star" was also known as Phosphorus or Lucifer ("the bearer of LIGHT") in the Western tradition. In ancient Rome Venus was associated with romantic attraction and sexual desire; the goddess "ruled" in springtime, and her festival, Veneralia, was celebrated on the first day of April. In Greek mythology the goddess was said to have been born off the coast of Cyprus from out of the sea foam (as Botticelli painted her). (Her Greek name, Aphrodite, comes from *aphros*, "foam.") Her metal was COPPER (from the Greek *cyprius*, literally "Cypriot"). Her cognomen Anadyomene means "climbing from the sea." The erotic cult of the goddess goes back to even earlier times; Plato, however, introduced



Venus as morning star precedes the sun; as evening star, follows it. J. Boschius, 1702



Venus with Taurus and Libra. Astrological guide, 1499

the distinction between a popular and a heavenly symbol of love (Aphrodite Pandemos and Aphrodite Urania, respectively). She was also the goddess of fertility (in Rome, Venus Genetrix).

In ASTROLOGY Venus is thought of as a clearly feminine planet, ruling Libra by day and Taurus by night. Venus is thought of as "gentle, sensual, motherly, a planet of music and joy, loving harmony and sympathy," a "benefactor" of the imagination and of love matches. The COLORS associated with it are pink and light BLUE; its stones the aquamarine, the light SAPPHIRE, bright red CORAL, lapis lazuli, and sky-blue TURQUOISE.

In ancient China the planet was associated with WHITE (the color of death!), autumn (the time of year when it is particularly visible as the evening star), the male sex, and the "ELEMENT" metal. It thus had completely different astrological associations in the Eastern and Western traditions.

In the Maya civilization of the Yucatan, Venus was observed very closely, and its orbit as morning and evening star calculated at length in the manuscript known today as the "Codex Dresdensis." Five Venus years, numbering 2920 days, correspond to eight solar years, as the Mayas noted, and in this time the planet appeared five times each as the morning star; five gods were associated with these appearances. The first of these appearances in each cycle was considered a sign of bad luck, because the star "fired its spears at various creatures." There were sim-

ilar beliefs in the Mexican highland, where the planet was associated with the divine Quetzalcoatl, or plumed serpent (see SNAKE). In ancient Peru Venus was known as "Chasca," which the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega explains as meaning "long- or curly-haired." It was revered as a page in the court of the divine SUN, at times preceding it and at times scurrying along behind it.

In early scholarship about prehistoric art, certain statuettes and reliefs were referred to as depictions of "Venus," apparently as a way of mocking Paleolithic ideals of beauty. These sculptures, however, clearly are not expressive of erotic desires or aesthetic notions: they depict distant female ancestors, and their corpulence is to be understood as a symbolic accentuation of plenitude and the ability to bear and nurse children. (Compare CORNUCOPIA.)

vices Cardinal sins or deadly sins are usually personified in the visual arts by ugly persons, often doing battle with the VIRTUES; the number, assortment, and attributes of the figures vary. The most important are the following: Pride—a crowned woman with bat's wings, riding a LION and holding a SCEPTER; Envy—a woman riding a DOG with a BONE in its MOUTH; Gluttony—a woman riding a FOX with a GOOSE in its mouth; Covetousness (or Avarice or Greed)—a man sitting on a money-chest, often with



Vices: Invidia (Envy) strangling herself. Cartari, 1647



Vices: Seven Deadly Sins as demons. Baldung Grien's *Pomegranate Book*, 1511

a BADGER; Sloth—a man sleeping on a DONKEY; Anger—a man tearing his garments, or two men dueling with SWORDS; Lust—a woman riding a PIG or goat, or a Siren (see WATER SPIRITS) holding both of her fish-tails in her hands (an image also appearing, however, on amulets to ward off evil); Unbelief—a person before an IDOL; Despair—a man hanging himself (JUDAS); Folly—a man biting STONES; Cowardice—a man fleeing a HARE. In the baroque period, Envy (*Invidia*) was also portrayed as a bare-bosomed woman strangling herself; Blame or Slander, as the Greek god Momus with a club; Deceit (*Fraus*), as a SNAKE with a human head and SCORPION tails. Late baroque sculptural groupings often portray the Stations of the Cross as individual scenes in which Christ atones for specific vices of humanity.

villagers, foolish In different cultures the inhabitants of specific villages or towns (usually not far from that of the storyteller in question) have become symbols of collective stupidity in the solution of problems. In ancient times the inhabitants of the Thracian city of Abdera were the butts of jokes. The inhabitants of the village of Gotham in Nottinghamshire (England) were said to have feigned stupidity in the early 13th century to dissuade King John from establishing a residence there. In the Renaissance the in-

habitants of the Saxon city of Schilda or Schildau (hence the present-day generic *Schildbürger*) became famous for their antics (*Schildbürgerstreiche*) as recounted in the *Lalbenbuch* of 1598, a reworking of material from the EULENSPIEGEL tradition and the writings of Hans Sachs. (In earlier collections similar stories had been told about the "Lalebürger," residents of a fictitious town.) In Jewish folklore of Eastern Europe the inhabitants of the shtetl Chelm played a similar role. In modern times the populations of entire countries have come to function in this way. In France, the Belgians, and in the United States, Polish people sometimes are the butt of such humor.

violet (color) A mixture of BLUE and RED, named for the FLOWER of the same name; the color traditionally stands for spirituality, linked with the blood of sacrifice. In liturgical usage it is associated with repentance, penance, expiation, and contemplation. Violet is made from equal parts of the primary colors blue and red, and thus symbolically combines wisdom and love. In old representations of Christ's Passion, he wears a violet mantle. Also, violet is the color used in the Church during the Advent season, the period of contemplation that precedes Christmas.

A similar, more reddish color is the purple of the ancient imperial capes or the fine clothing of the rich. Purple dye came from the secretions of two species of sea snail and thus was very costly; this made purple cloth a prized status symbol. In antiquity and the Middle Ages the lichen orchil (Latin *Roccella tinctoria*, Spanish *orchilla*) was used to make an "imitation" purple dye. Orchil was harvested primarily on the coast of the Canary Islands (ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED). (See also AMETHYST.)

violet (flower) (Latin *Viola odorata*, Greek *ionia*) A small, highly fragrant FLOWER, said in Central Europe to "teach the virtue of modesty" because, tiny though it is, it is a favorite symbol of springtime. According to Greek mythology, the meadow from which Hades, the god of the underworld, abducted



Violet (flower). Hohberg, 1675

Persephone was covered with crocuses, ROSES, HYACINTHS, and violets. On the Roman *dies violaris*, or violet day, the dead were commemorated and their graves decorated with violets. Garlands of violets were worn at banquets because the flower was believed to have a "cooling" effect. It was also believed to reduce the intensity of a reveler's hang-over the morning after.

An old German superstition recommended that the first three violets found at the edge of the forest be swallowed as a medicine to ward off all maladies. Hohberg (1675) offered the following allegorical verses: "Sweet violet tall grass doth oft conceal,/ And yet its lovely fragrance makes it known./ So, too, the Christian leads a quiet life,/ Yet one for which great honors are in store." The bluish color of the blossom, associated with loyalty and constancy, made it a favorite gift for lovers to exchange. In the Middle Ages the finding of the first violet of the year was an occasion for great festivities and outdoor dancing. (See also VIOLET [COLOR].)

virgin, maiden, maid (Latin *virgo*, Greek *parthenos*) A young woman, unmarried and chaste, symbolizes in many cultures an ascetic turning toward the otherworldly; in some cases this abstinence is associated with a magical cult of abstinence rather than strictly moral considerations. A period of virginity was required of the women seers (see SIBYLS) and vestals of ancient Rome so that they would be constantly available to receive communications from their divinity.

Many gods, heroes, and rulers were said to have been conceived nonsexually by virgins, e.g., Hebe (the Greek goddess of youth), Perseus, ALEXANDER THE GREAT, Genghis Khan, Lao-tzu, and, in ancient Mexico, the god Quetzalcóatl (see SNAKE). The emperor Augustus was said to have been miraculously sired by a snake, the sacred creature of Apollo, in one of the temples of the god. The vestal virgin Rhea Silvia was made pregnant with Romulus and Remus by MARS, the god of war. Christian theologians interpret these myths as anticipations of the conception of Christ; in medieval paintings of the Annunciation, God's procreative power is depicted as a DOVE within a beam of LIGHT striking Mary's head or EAR. WINDOWS and CRYSTALS (see also PRECIOUS STONES) that transmit light intact are symbols for the Virgin Mary.

Ancient Peru also had its sacral virgins, as the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) and others report: "They lived until the end of their lives in constant seclusion, preserving their virginity to the last . . . for they said that the wives of the SUN must not be of the ordinary sort, that anyone could see. And this seclusion was so extreme that not even the KING himself would make use of his privilege . . . , i.e., would see or speak with them. . . . The principal activity of the solar virgins was SPINNING and weaving. . . . The nuns produced all of these [fabrics] by hand and in great quantity—for the sun, their husband. And, since the sun could neither wear nor set aside the finery, they sent it to the King as the sun's natural and legal successor . . . and since



Virgin with eagle's wings. Medieval heraldic insignia



Virgin: St. Juliana keeps the devil in chains. W. Auer, 1890

they had been made for the sun, and by the hands of the Coyas, his wives, who because of their station were of the very blood of the sun, these fabrics were venerated above all others." If a solar virgin was found in an unchaste relationship with a mortal man, her punishment was to be buried alive; her lover, however, was hanged, and his birthplace destroyed. Among nonliterate peoples we also encounter the notion that virgins have superior powers to those of married women. The mythologist F. Karlinger comments as follows upon an Australian aborigine myth about the constellation Pleiades: "The two [STARS of] Pleiades who married Wurunnah do not shine as brightly as those who remained virgins. The belief in the greater power [here, brightness] of virgins as compared with married women, prevails among the majority of exotic peoples." See also MOTHER.

The sun is in the house of Virgo, the sixth sign of the zodiac, from August 23 until September 22. BEES, the FOX, and barnyard fowl have a magical association with this sign, which is one of the "EARTH signs," along with Taurus (see BULL) and CAPRICORN. Traditional astrological symbology associates with Virgo such qualities as self-denial, intellectual clarity and cool-headedness, untapped possibilities, the transmutability of primal matter (the alchemist's *materia prima*: the sign is ruled by the

planet MERCURY; see SULFUR AND MERCURY). According to the astral legend communicated by Aratus in his didactic poem *Phaenomena* (third century B.C.), Virgo is the personification of justice (Greek Dike), who in a distant GOLDEN AGE lived among mortals but then became disenchanted with them as their mores became cruder; she spread her WINGS and flew up into the HEAVENS, where she is visible only as a distant constellation. It is no accident that the sign of the zodiac next to her is Libra (see SCALES).

virtues (from Latin *virtus*, "manliness") In Christian art, personifications of the "three theological virtues," faith, hope, and love (or charity), and the "four cardinal virtues," courage, justice, prudence, and temperance—SEVEN in all. The "theological virtues" Fides, Spes, and Caritas are said to be the daughters of St. SOPHIA (Wisdom), and their most important attributes are as follows: Faith—a burning HEART, CROSS, candle, and BOOK (the Bible); Hope—an ANCHOR, DOVE, SHIP, LABARUM, CORNUCOPIA; Love—CHI-RHO, LAMB, children, PELICAN, BREAD. The attributes of the four cardinal virtues include the following: Courage (Fortitudo)—a KNIGHT's armor, LION's skin, SWORD and buckler, Samson's PILLAR, FLAG; Justice (Justitia)—SCALES, carpenter's SQUARE, globe, law book; Prudence (Prudentia)—a SNAKE ("Be ye therefore wise as serpents"—Matthew 10:16), MIRROR, TORCH, coffin (memento mori); Temperance (Temperantia)—two containers for mixing WATER and WINE, a CAMEL and an ELEPHANT for riding, HOURGLASS, windmill.

Other virtues are also personified: Patience (Patientia) with the ox; Gentleness (Mansuetudo) with the LAMB; Humility (Humilitas) with the DOVE; Obedience (Oboedientia) with the camel; Perseverance (Perseverantia) with the brooding HEN; Chastity (Castitas) with the LILY or the UNICORN; Peace (Pax) or Harmony (Concordia) with the olive branch or a pair of doves. All these figures are generally portrayed as young women in long dresses; at times they are shown struggling against the VICES (psychomachia). Symbolic plants as-

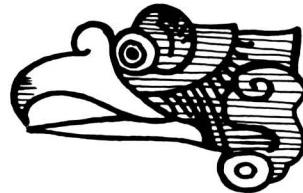
sociated with the individual Virtues include the cedar (Humility), the PALM (Sophia, Wisdom), the CYPRESS (Pietas, Piety), the grapevine (Temperance), the ROSE bush with THORNS (Courage).

The assortment of virtues and the choice of attributes vary, within both the Gothic architectural tradition and the world of painting.

vitriol In modern times, a general term for water-soluble sulfates of heavy metals (e.g., copper, iron, zinc); in the symbology of ALCHEMY, however, a symbolic name for the combination of ABOVE AND BELOW, an acronym formed from the Latin sentence “*Visita inferiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultum lapidem*” (“Seek out the lower reaches of the earth, and when you have completed this task, you will discover the hidden stone,” i.e., the philosopher’s stone). Some variations in the sentence are found in the writings of alchemists, e.g., “. . . invenietis occultum lapidem, veram medicinam” (“. . . you will discover the hidden stone, the true medicine”), which yields “vitriolum” in the place of “vitriol.” Although these sentences seem to suggest a normal technical process for refining ore, they are meant allegorically, referring to a process through which people are purified, and that which is “down below” is led to ascend into the spiritual realm.

Because sulfuric acid, also called “oil of vitriol,” is so corrosive, the words “vitriol” and “vitriolic” have come to be used figuratively to refer to vituperative feelings and utterances.

vulture The individual species (e.g., great bearded vulture, Egyptian vulture) are not symbolically distinct. Vultures are considered less “regal” than eagles, since they are known only as eaters of carrion; the Iberians and the Persians left bodies (especially of those killed in combat) for them to eat, and this is still the custom in Tibet, and in Parsiism, in which bodies are laid out in the *dakhmas* (“towers of silence”) for this purpose. Only in ancient Egypt was the vulture highly revered, primarily in the form of Nekhbet, the vulture goddess of Elkab in



Vulture: Aztec calendar symbol Cozcaucuahltli. Codex Borgia

Upper Egypt. The vulture is frequently portrayed hovering protectively over the pharaoh, and the queen wore the “vulture headdress.” Nekhbet was the patron goddess of childbirth and of motherhood (see MOTHER) in general. Vultures also appear in the form of the goddess Mut, and together with the SNAKE they adorn the pharaoh’s crown. It was noticed in classical antiquity that vultures frequently followed behind campaigning armies, and this apparently led to the legend of their gift of prophecy: they were said to gather, three days before the fact, at sites where battles were to occur. Zeus can also transform himself into a vulture, and in Homer’s *Iliad* (VII, 59) Apollo and Athena are said to be sitting in a tree, in this form. The underworld demon Eurynomus was portrayed sitting on a vulture’s remains; a vulture or eagle ate PROMETHEUS’ liver. For the Romans, the vulture was sacred to the god of war, and it was a sacrilege to kill the bird. Its use in augury as an oracular animal (e.g., at the founding of Rome) apparently goes back to Etruscan tradition.

It was widely believed that vultures were hatched without fertilization by the male, whose role was assumed by the east WIND. Thus the bird came to symbolize the VIRGIN Mary. The early Christian text *Physiologus* reports that when it is “pregnant” the bird flies to India to get the “birthing STONE,” which is hollow and contains a rattling pit (like the “eagle stone,” or *aëites*). “When the female feels the beginnings of labor, she takes the stone, sits upon it, and gives birth [!] painlessly.” The symbolic meaning is as follows: “You who are pregnant with the Holy Ghost, take the spiritual birthing stone—which the builders have cast aside and which has become the cornerstone—

and, seated upon it, you will give birth to the spirit of salvation. . . . For in fact this birthing stone of the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ our Lord, hewn without human labor, that is, come to be, out of a virgin, without human seed. And, just as the birthing stone has within it a second, rattling stone, so does the body of the Lord have

godliness resonating within it." In India Shani or Manda, the old, feeble, ugly personification of the PLANET SATURN, rides a vulture. In ancient Mexico the vulture is the 16th of the 20 day-signs (*Cozcacuauhtli*), and it was believed that the bird could live to a very old age because the king vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) is bald.

W

walnut According to the *Historia naturalis* of Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79), the shade of the walnut TREE is particularly dark, and harmful for plants and persons. The nut itself, which in many fairy tales and legends contains secret riches, is of considerable symbolic importance in general: a hard shell surrounds valuable contents. In the Jewish tradition of Biblical exegesis (*Midrash ha-ne'elam*), Holy Scriptures are likened to a walnut: the shell corresponds to the historical facts they recount, which contain symbols and mysteries. St. Augustine (A.D. 354–430) writes of the nut as involving three substances: the leathery fruit or “flesh” that surrounds the nut, the “bones” of the shell, and the kernel or “soul” inside. The fruit is also the flesh of Christ with the bitterness of suffering; the shell is the wood of the cross; and the kernel is the sweet interior of divine revelation, which nourishes us and, through the oil that it yields, also provides LIGHT. We refer to a difficult problem as “a hard nut to crack,” and eccentric or mentally unstable persons are said to be “nuts” (noun and adjective). The slang use of “nuts” to mean “testicles,” although peculiar to English, is not totally dissociable from a European symbolic tradition linking the walnut to fertility (and that which is hidden): walnuts are a common wedding present, and Sextus Pompeius (second century after Christ) mentions the custom of pelting newlyweds with walnuts (as we might

with RICE). It is said in France that a rich harvest of walnuts means that many children will be born as well. Psychologists in the Jungian tradition seem to view the nut similarly: “Dreams of walnuts may refer to attempts to solve a difficult problem in which something valuable is at stake. But far more often walnuts, like so much graffiti, simply represent female genitalia” [Aeppli].

wampum A symbolic object associated with Native Americans of the Eastern regions of what are now the United States and Canada; less familiar internationally than the peace pipe (CALUMET) or the TOMAHAWK. The Iroquois nations wore wampum BELTS constructed as mosaics from porcupine quills and sometimes adorned with white shell beads; the word “wampum” (or “wampum-peag”) originally referred to these beads themselves. Emissaries wore wampum belts for purposes of identification, much as the CADUCEUS was carried in European antiquity. “Belts or strips in varying length and a great variety of designs served as simple documents; chains of varying length and varying arrangement of light and dark beads served as devices for remembering legends, historical events, and covenants. Specialists were trained in the significance of specific numbers of chains and belts so as to be able to interpret any ‘document’ that they were handed. These men were living libraries who could narrate a long story as their fingers moved over the beads” [La Farge]. In colonial times settlers used wampum belts made of porcelain beads from Europe as currency for transactions with Native Americans; thus the word “wampum” came in time to be slang for “money.”

water In many myths of the creation of the world, water is the primordial fluid from which all life comes, but it is also the ELE-



Wampum belt with symbol of treaty between William Penn and the Delaware



Water or rain god. Iran, ca. 2500 B.C.

MENT in which creatures drown and matter dissolves. There are many myths in which great FLOODS close cycles of creation and destroy forms of life that were displeasing to the gods. For the psychologist, water can symbolize the deeper layers of the psyche, inhabited by mysterious life forms (compare FISH). This elemental symbol is highly ambivalent, since it is associated both with life and fertility and with submersion and destruction. The SUN descends every evening into the water of the Western Sea, to warm the realm of the dead; thus water is also associated with the AFTERLIFE. The "waters under the EARTH" have frequently been associated with primordial CHAOS; the rain-water that falls from the HEAVENS, however, with life-giving blessings from on high. Whirlpools (see SPIRAL) offer a graphic symbol for life's difficulties and upheavals; quietly flowing RIVERS, for life continuing smoothly as planned. In many cultures ponds, pools, and especially SPRINGS were believed to be dwelling places for nymphs, water-sprites, or prophetic (and often dangerous) demons of various sorts. Here, too, is an indication of the ambivalent symbolic character of water.

WINE mixed with water in the Eucharist constitutes a special DUALITY—the "FIRE" of the wine mingled with the passive element, water—a reference to the dual nature (divine and human) of the person of Jesus. (The personification of temperance, Temperantia, e.g., in the TAROT cards, includes a depiction of mixing wine and water.) In other Christian contexts, water is generally the cleansing element that washes away sin in the sacrament of baptism.

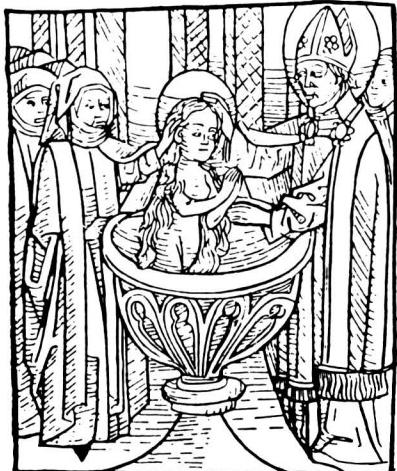
Water was used in witches' ordeals because it was believed that this "pure" element would reject those who were in league with the DEVIL. Those suspected of witchcraft were bound hand and foot, then thrown into the water; those who sank were deemed innocent (and pulled out with a rope), because it was assumed that the guilty would float like a cork.

Holy water is of great importance in Roman Catholic practice, both the holy water which has not yet been mixed with oil (chrism) and the *aqua benedicta* from specific holy days which the faithful take with them and place in receptacles at the THRESHOLDS of their homes—where it is used for moistening one's fingers before making the sign of the cross, and formerly for sprinkling in the interior of the house. Drops of holy water sprinkled on the ground are also popularly believed to help the "poor souls in PURGATORY" and reduce the intensity of the fires in which they are being cleansed.

The New World conception of the AFTERLIFE as a watery realm is a foreign one to most Europeans. It is clearly documented, however, on earthenware vessels (presumably Mayan) of the Yucatán. The Aztecs called the paradise of the rain god Tlaloc "Tlalocan"; it was a far more pleasant region than the underworld, Mictlan, the abode to which ordinary mortals were consigned after death. (Compare HELL.) In the 20-day calendar of Central America, however, the ninth day sign, water (Aztec Atl, Maya *Muluc*), was associated with excessive rain-



Water springs from the rock by the power of God. Hohberg, 1675



Water: Baptism by immersion. *Legenda Aurea*, Esslingen, Germany, 1481

fall; it was considered a sign of bad luck and predicted disease and fever. It was depicted as a bluish, forked stream, capped by waves. It was part of the Mexican hieroglyph for "war," *atl-tlachinolli*, literally translated "water/fire," the conflict between the two elements being the essence of this duality.

In many cultures special reverence is given to water that flows directly from the depths of the earth, like a gift from the subterranean gods—especially when it is hot (thermal) or has special curative properties because of its mineral content. Several Ice Age CAVE TEMPLES have been found in the Pyrenees near such springs, and they continued to be revered in classical antiquity, as remains of special offerings indicate. Hot springs were of particular importance in Celtic regions, where the water was considered to be part of the bounties of Mother Earth



Water: Divinity, overflowing vessel. Seal of King Gudea, Sumeria, 3rd millennium B.C.

(e.g., the goddess Sulis, worshipped at the thermal spring in Bath, England). The custom of throwing coins into fountains seems to be a vestige of symbolic sacrifices to water deities believed capable of fulfilling wishes (because of a linking of the notions of earth, fertility, and fortune). Nymphs, incidentally, were revered in these contexts as personifications of the effects that the faithful hoped to obtain from the waters. (See WATER SPIRITS.)

The belief that ritually consecrated water can bring divine blessings—a belief that unites the cleansing and fertilizing properties of water in religious ritual—is not limited to Catholicism; it is also found in non-European religions, such as Parseeism. In Indonesia trance-dancers are sprinkled with consecrated water to bring them back to reality. Water is thought of as having a purifying effect in the Isis cult of late antiquity. In the Christian world, the water of baptism is believed to wash away all of the faults inherited from a person's ancestors; the person is, as it were, reborn. In ancient Mexico, too, a similar ritual was connected with the washing of newborns: the midwife prayed that the water might remove any evil clinging to the baby from its parents. There were ritual BATHS, such as the Jewish mikvah, in many older civilizations, fulfilling not only hygienic but also symbolic functions. The most noteworthy include the artificial bathing ponds in the pre-Aryan ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, the Hindu bath in the Ganges, the "lustration pool" in Knossos (Crete), purification baths before the Eleusinian mysteries, and similar symbolic practices in Greek cults of late antiquity. ("For pious folk a single drop's enough; whole oceans leave the wicked still uncleansed.") There were symbolic purification baths in ancient Mexico as well: the priest-king of the holy city of Tollan performed midnight ablutions, and the city of Tenochtitlan had three sacred baths. At the festival of Xochiquetzal the entire populace was supposed to bathe in the early morning; anyone who failed to would be visited with venereal and skin infections. Ritual washings are part of the rules of Islam; only where water is not



Water: Sea god Neptune with wife Amphitrite and trident. Cartari, 1647

available (i.e., in the desert) can pure sand be substituted for this purpose.

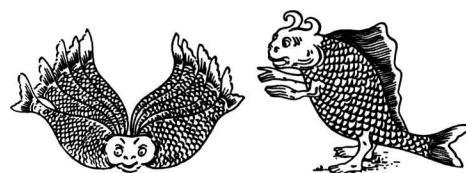
An exhaustive discussion of the relevant rituals would lead us too far from symbology into the realm of religion proper; however, a few additional beliefs from European antiquity and thereafter should be mentioned. It was believed that moving water, especially seawater, could wash away all evil spells. Those who called upon subterranean gods used water from springs; for celestial gods, rain water. The morning DEW, according to Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79), is “a true medicine, a gift from heaven, for eyes, ulcers, and intestines”; the ancients believed that it came from moonbeams or the tears of the dawn-goddess EOS. In the Judeo-Christian tradition the dew symbolizes God’s bounties raining down from heaven.

In ALCHEMY, too, this *ros coelestis* was gathered up in cloths, according to the *Mutus Liber* (1677). This may, however, be a veiled reference, meaning not literally dew but the volatile element mercury (see SULFUR AND MERCURY). There are frequent references to the use of “May dew” as a solvent “impregnated with Nature’s SALTS”—although it is difficult here to separate allegory and popular belief.

In the symbolic theories of analytic psychology as well, water—an element that is essential for life but has no nutritional value—

is considered to be of great importance, standing for the source of human life (children come from ponds or wells into the world of the living) or that which keeps us alive. It is the fundamental symbol of all the energy of the unconscious—an energy that can be dangerous when it overflows its proper limits (a frequent dream sequence). Still, water is a favorable, salubrious image when it stays within its normal confines (pond, river—or even the sea itself, remaining beyond the shore) and thus, as in many FAIRY TALES, can truly be called “the water of life.”

water spirits Even more so than FISH (which are themselves often depicted with supernatural features), water spirits symbolize the vitality of water and especially its status as a source of life—an association that explains its traditional place in the YIN, or “feminine,” half of the cosmos. For the analytical psychologist, water spirits—occasionally masculine but usually feminine—personify specific material from the unconscious. In ancient Hindu myth the *apsaras* were originally heavenly dancers following the god Indra, but who live in bodies of water (usually LOTUS ponds) when they come down to the earth and use their wiles to keep ascetics from pursuing their strict practices. The love between the water nymph Urvashi and King Puruavas is the subject of a compelling narrative by Kalidasa (ca. 500 B.C.). There are similar legends in the European tradition, although the marriages between humans and water creatures (often named Undine or Melusine) rarely prove to be lasting or fulfilling. These creatures often have the form of mermaids and are thus “women” only in part. Their seductive appeal comes from their beautiful song and their long, golden



Water Spirits: Fabulous creatures from the Chinese text *Shan-hai-jing*



Water Spirits: Melusine bathing in her chamber. Illustration, Antwerp, 1491



Water Spirits: The nymph Galatea. Cartari, 1647

HAIR, through which they pass GOLDEN combs (e.g., the Rhine Lorelei)—usually to destroy the men whom they captivate. There are many legends in which mermaids long to wed humans as a way of getting a soul (which they, like all spirits of the elements, lack). The classical forerunners of medieval European mermaids were the naiads, Nereids, and sirens of Greek mythology—portrayed, on the one hand, as shy nymphs

inhabiting SPRINGS, but, on the other, as treacherously seductive figures.

In the imagery of ALCHEMY a mermaid with two fish-tails represents the DUALITY OF SULFUR AND MERCURY in the state of separation.

In HERALDRY a mermaid in a coat of arms refers to the legendary marriage of the earliest male ancestor of the line with such a creature—although such unions, as we have noted, were generally not believed to be lasting.

Aquarius is the 11th of the 12 signs of the zodiac (see STARS), especially familiar from references to an “Age of Aquarius”—already begun or about to begin—believed to succeed that of Pisces. Those born under Aquarius (January 21–February 19) are said to have mystical tendencies and a longing for freedom of movement; they seek to bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious realms, the everyday world and the supernatural.



Water Spirits: Sea monster Scylla, the bane of seafarers. Cartari, 1647

wedding customs MARRIAGE ceremonies throughout the world are accompanied by symbolic actions; a wedding frequently offers an image of the ideal fusion of two cosmic elements. A wedding is usually a public,



Wedding of symbolic complements Gabricius and Beia.
Alchemist's emblem, M. Maier, *Symbola*, 1618

officially recognized event that makes known to the entire community the fact that the bride and groom are exchanging their previous status as "youth" and "maiden" (see **VIRGIN**) for new rights and responsibilities. Especially in monogamous societies, the marriage is celebrated as a permanent, legal bond; the bride is often thought of as the principal figure (we often use the word "bridal" to mean "nuptial"), and most of the symbolic customs are centered upon her. She has the splendid clothing, jewelry, **VEILS**, **WREATHS**, and **CROWNS**; the bridegroom, by comparison, is quite modestly adorned. The exchange of **RINGS** goes back to the symbolism of the **CIRCLE**: with no end and no beginning, the circular ring seems to refer to the romantic ideal of "marriages made in **HEAVEN**" (i.e., predestined from birth). This is no purely Occidental notion, for marriage was spoken of in similar terms in ancient China, where the "Old Man in the **MOON**" paired up newborn boys and girls, linking their legs with an invisible **RED** thread; as the boy and girl grew to adulthood, they felt a powerful attraction to each other and finally married.

Certain modern wedding customs, such as the throwing of **RICE** (a symbol of fertility), are of Asian origin (like the rice itself) and do not derive from any Occidental tradition.

In polygamous societies, weddings are usually celebrated more quietly. If the bride was expected to be a virgin, her purity often had to be demonstrated by the exhibiting of blood-stained bed sheets upon the consummation of the marriage. (See also **SLIPPER**, **HEADDRESS**, **COPPER**.)

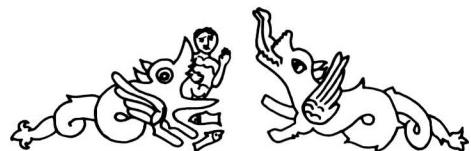
wells Often at **SPRINGS**, wells are traditionally shafts leading down to the world below (in the tale of "Mother Holle" [Brothers Grimm]) or to the "waters of the deep," which hold secret powers. The city-dweller of the present day can hardly imagine the importance of a well, as a source of potable water, for village communities. In Islam a **SQUARE** brick-lined well is an image of **PARADISE**. There are early Christian representations of the fountain in the Garden of Eden, from which the **FOUR RIVERS** originate. Here the life-giving **ELEMENT WATER** comes to light, and it is associated symbolically with baptism and with the **BLOODY** water flowing from the wound in the side of the crucified Christ. There were many portrayals of the scene from the New Testament, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well." The belief in the curative powers of water from the earth goes back to ancient, indeed prehistoric cults. Christianity readily took up such traditions, and pilgrimages were encouraged to rivers and sources about



Wells: Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well.
Detail, Psalter, 1493

which miraculous legends had spread. They were associated with the Virgin Mary and often especially with the curing of eye ailments (through an association between the eye as the MIRROR of the soul and the water-surface as mirror). In the secular domain there are legends of a "fountain of eternal youth." Among the Mayas of the Yucatán well-shafts running through limestone (Tzenotes) were holy sites where sacrifices were made. As analytic psychology has recognized, wells often appear in fairy tales and dreams as places of penetration into the unknown worlds of the unconscious, of what is hidden and, in everyday life, inaccessible; wells are associated with the symbolic notions of the cleansing BATH, drinking from the sources of life, and quenching our thirst for higher knowledge. An opposing image is the "bottomless pit" of Revelation 9, out of which fire and brimstone issue and in which the devil, defeated, is imprisoned for a thousand years. In ancient Chinese literature the well is associated with eroticism and "The Feast of Pleasure of the Heavenly Lovers" on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month.

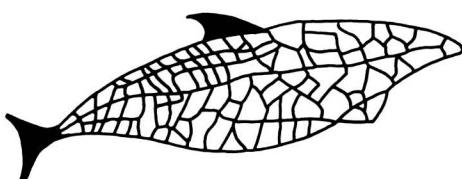
whale Traditionally, the sea monster Cetus that Perseus slew to free the princess Andromeda has been thought of as a whale, as has the "great fish" that swallowed Jonah: "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. . . . And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" [Jonah 1:17–2:1, 10]. Christian thought frequently finds anticipations of scenes in the Gospels in the Old Testament; thus Christ in Matthew 12:40 offers the



Whale: The prophet Jonah, swallowed and vomited. Ravello Cathedral, 12th century

following prediction of his own resurrection: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This passage has repeatedly been understood as a general symbol of the resurrection of the dead and has provided a favorite motif for Christian art.

The legend of St. Brendan (*Navigatio Sancti Brandani*) includes the Sinbad-like scene in which the sea-faring monks end up on the back of a sleeping whale. The medieval bestiaries offer the following remarks: there are bushes growing on the back of the sea monster, and thus "sailors mistake it for an island, land their ships there, and build fires. But as soon as the creature feels the heat, it plunges suddenly under water and pulls the ship down into the depths of the sea"—a fate which Brandan and his brothers are spared. "The same thing happens to those who know nothing of the devil and his wiles. . . . He pulls them down into the fiery depths of hell." It is also written that a fragrance emanates from the mouth of the whale and attracts FISH for the whale to devour. (Compare PANTHER.) "This is also the fate of those whose faith is not steadfast, who give themselves over to every passing desire, following every temptation, until the devil suddenly swallows them up" [Unterkircher].



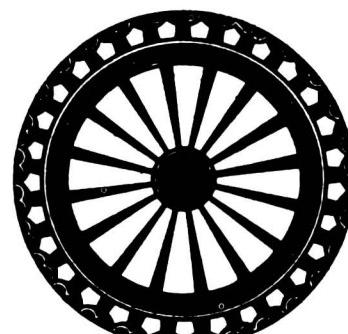
Whale. Rock engraving, near Drammen, Norway, Stone Age

wheel An important element in the history of civilization, but one not in use in the pre-Columbian New World even in the most highly developed civilizations. The principle of the wheel, however, was not unknown in the Western Hemisphere, as we see from toy figures made of clay, found in the region of the Gulf of Mexico, that

moved on disk-like wheels. In the Old World, the wheel made possible the constructions of carts (see CHARIOTS), which had not only practical but also religious applications. In prehistoric representations their wheels often have spokes in the form of a cross (the "wheel-cross"), and such wheels also appear by themselves in similar drawings. Symbolologists associate the wheel both with the CIRCLE and with quadripartite organization (see FOUR), as in the cycle of the four seasons. Whereas the circle seems to remain stationary, the addition of spokes gives it a symbolic association with rotation, the dynamic, the cyclical, becoming and passing away, and freedom from any spatial confinement. Wheels and wheel-crosses frequently symbolize the SUN, which "rolls around HEAVEN": we find this association in the custom of rolling burning wheels over cliffs in solstice rituals. In a broader sense the wheel stands for the entire cosmos in its cyclical development, and at times even the divinity who created it and who is perceived as being in perpetual movement. In Asian cultures the wheel is associated with the cycle of rebirth, and in Buddhism in particular with the "wheel of apprenticeship," whose movement through successive reincarnations frees humanity from suffering. In addition, the wheel is a symbol of cosmic order, represented in miniature in the architecture of cities. W. Müller describes the "circle cities" of ancient Iran as follows: "Iran is the classic land of cities formed like wheels, each with its precise circumference mathematically determined . . . in conformity with the Iranian cosmology of the extended, round, strictly bounded earth, divided into six *karshvars* (sectors) placed around a central seventh *karshvar* to form a 'gleaming, resounding wheel.' The Iranian metropolis likewise has its hub, spokes, and rim" (1961). From ancient Ceylon (Sri Lanka) we find traces of an "empire of the wheel," and similarly in Brahman, Jainist, and Buddhist writings. "The only ruler who can become emperor of the wheel is one who goes through heavenly transformation and one to whom the jeweled wheel of the heavens shows itself. This charkavartin in-

habits (and this is a first indication of the cosmological structures beneath the surface here) a fortress fortified seven times, its walls studded with seven sorts of PRECIOUS STONES, its four gates gleaming with gold, silver, beryl, and crystal. . . . As the new king went through his heavenly transformation and followed the moral commandments, the wheel arose with its thousand spokes, with hub and rim—rose again after disappearing upon the death of his predecessor—and rolled eastward." The king followed its course, subjugating the regions lying at every point of the compass. "Thus the jeweled wheel was triumphant over the entire earth and the waters that surround it, and could roll homeward to the fortress of the king" [Müller, ibid.]. Müller likens this wheel to the "wheel brooch of the kings of Ireland, a similar jewel, similarly bequeathed from one ruler to the next."

In the Old Testament flaming wheels appear around God's head in the Book of Daniel, and in Ezekiel's vision he saw wheels whose "rings were full of eyes" and which "turned not when they went" [Ezekiel 1:15–20]—symbolizing omniscience and dynamic power. Medieval art frequently portrays the "wheel of life," which raises mortals up and then brings them down, or the "wheel of fortune," which never stands still, being constantly subject to the turns of fate. (In modern usage, frequent references to the "wheel of history" or "of time" and their inexorable course, suggest something of the appeal of this fatalistic image.) The goddess FORTUNA is usually portrayed standing on a



Wheel of apprenticeship: the dharma chakra symbol

sphere, but occasionally on a wheel. (Similarly, the tenth card of the Major Arcana, the trumps of the tarot deck, is the Wheel of Fortune, symbolizing life's ups and downs, fate, the inevitable.) Depictions of the zodiac or the cycle of the seasons are usually arranged in the form of a wheel. Already in ancient times Anacreon (580–495 b.c.) said of the inconstancy of fate: "Human life rolls along, shifting like the spoke of a wagon wheel"—with the movement of the wheel soon compensating, it is true, for moments of excessive hardship.

Since the cherubim (or, in some early texts, a different order of ANGELS, the "thrones") are represented in the form of fiery winged wheels, often depictions of PARADISE contain a wheel in the place of the angel at the gate.

In a Christian context, the "wheel-cross" represents Christ's lordship over the earth. Such symbols (as rock drawings, for example) are thus not necessarily prehistoric: they can be understood within the context of Christian symbology. Medieval cathedrals often contain a form of rose-window called *rota* (Latin for "wheel"), with the image of Christ at the center, symbolizing the Savior's central importance in the plan of God the Father. Such rose-windows recall the structure of the Indian MANDALA, used in meditation to help center the personality upon the unconscious divine nucleus of the soul.

Crosses on old Irish graves combine the form of the cross with that of the wheel or circle: they resemble the traditional wheel-cross, except that the extremities of the cross extend beyond the circumference of the circle, suggesting that the Cross of Christ transcends the terrestrial.

The symbolic wheel on flags of rebels in the Peasants' Wars (16th century, Central Europe) refers not to the inexorable course of history but to the phonetic resemblance between the German words for "wheel" and "file" (as in "rank and file") and to the idea of forming a strong, unified RING.

The wheel appears occasionally as an attribute of saints, especially St. Catherine,

and also St. Willegis of Mainz, who used the wheel to recall his humble origins in a family of artisans.

white Since white can be defined either as the absence of all pigmentary COLOR or as the presence of all the colors of the spectrum of light, it thus can symbolize either the undisturbed innocence of prelapsarian Eden or the ultimate goal toward which all imperfect mortals strive—purification and a heavenly restoration of that "lost" innocence. In many cultures, white or simply uncolored garments are priestly vestments, associated symbolically with purity and truth. Newly baptized Christians wore white robes, and the souls of the just are similarly depicted in paintings of the Last Judgment. The Pope's white garments symbolize transfiguration, glory, and the road to heaven. PYTHAGORAS recommended that singers of sacred hymns should wear white. White animals were sacrificed to heavenly deities; BLACK, to those of the underworld. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a white DOVE.

White, however, also has negative symbolic meanings, primarily because of its association with "the pallor of death." In dreams a "white HORSE is often linked to the notion or experience of death. The 'rider on a pale horse' appears in regions where death can intervene" [Aeppli]. In many cultures ghosts are thought of as wearing, or being, white—reverse images, as it were, of "shades" (see SHADOWS).

In the Chinese symbolic tradition, white is the color of age, autumn, the West, and misfortune, but also of virginity and purity. ("White Lotus" was the name of a secret society that sought to improve the mores of the populace.) White is generally considered the Chinese color of mourning, but this is in fact the "uncolor" of undyed mourning garments.

In ALCHEMY brightening or whitening (*albedo*) is a sign that the *materia prima*, after the stage of *nigredo* (see BLACK), is being transformed into the philosopher's STONE. (Compare LILY.)

whore Term of opprobrium for a prostitute, derived from the Indo-European root *karo-s* ("beloved, desirable"), as is the Latin *carus* ("beloved, dear, expensive"). Prostitution for religious reasons, e.g., to honor a goddess of fertility and life, was widespread in the Middle East and was understood as an expression of a woman's sacrifice of herself to the deity in question (or to the stranger or priest representing that deity). This practice explains the Hebrew word *kedeshen* ("sanctified") and the Greek word *hierodule* ("sacred maiden"). The law of Moses forbade this custom: "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel. . . . Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God . . . for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God" [Deuteronomy 23:17–18]. But, asks the Epistle of James, "was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers?" [2:25]. This quote refers to the prostitute Rahab, who had hidden Joshua's messengers in Jericho and prepared the conquest of the city [Joshua 2:1–24]. The aversion to extramarital sexuality prevailed, however (**BABEL, SODOM AND GOMORRHA**), as is seen most clearly in references in the Book of Revelation to the "great whore" of Babylon (see **RED**). The **COURTESANS** of

Greece (*hetaerae*) had a higher social rank and are not to be confused with "common" prostitutes.

willow Some symbols have similar meanings in Europe and Asia; the willow, however, has very different associations in the two traditions. In the ancient Mediterranean world it was generally believed that the seeds of this **TREE** were dispersed before they matured, and that the willow therefore did not reproduce "sexually." This belief made it an image of chastity and an ideal first ingredient for preparations to promote sexual continence. In another sense, because green branches can be cut from each willow seemingly endlessly, the tree was likened to the Bible, the (inexhaustible) source of wisdom. Origen (A.D. 185–254) promised "the harvest festival of eternity" to all those who preserved the "willow branches of their chastity." In the Middle Ages and thereafter, the willow was considered to be one of the trees in which the saliva of the sick could be placed in order to heal them. Willow catkins are blessed on Palm Sunday and placed in the household to ward off all evil (especially **LIGHTNING**). The weeping willow, because its branches droop so "sorrowfully," was a symbol of **DEATH** frequently planted in cemeteries.

There are contradictory reports about the role of the willow in the cult of **ASCLEPIUS**, the ancient Greek god of healing. It was the custom in Athens, during the fertility festival of the Thesmophoriae to place willow branches in women's beds, supposedly to ward off **SNAKES** (but perhaps in truth to attract serpentine fertility demons). The priests of Asclepius are said to have sought often to cure sterility. In any case, an extract of willow bark was thought to cure rheumatism.

In ancient China, however, the willow was clearly an erotic symbol associated with springtime. **COURTESANS** were referred to as "flowers and willows." A woman's waist was called a "willow tree"; a beautiful woman's eyebrows were likened to the movement of willow leaves; her pubic hair was called



Whore. Woodcut, Luther's New Testament, Wittenberg, 1522

"deep willow shadows." A young maiden was "gentle willow, fresh flower." The tree had other associations, however. Willow branches were thought to ward off evil spirits; they were also a common gift to civil servants who had been transferred to the provinces.

windows In symbology, openings that admit supernatural LIGHT. Thus magnificent stained-glass windows adorn sacred structures such as the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages (e.g., Reims, Chartres, Sainte-Chapelle de Paris), to suggest the coming glory of the "heavenly JERUSALEM." Light from outside or from ABOVE corresponds to God's spirit, and the window itself to the VIRGIN Mary (since the window is not itself a source of light but transmits the light that comes from God). The framework holding the stained glass in an individual window was often designed in accordance with the principles of NUMBER symbolism, in threes (for the TRINITY) or FOOURS (for the EVANGELISTS), or in rosettes (see ROSE), which often meant a division into SEVEN sections. As to COLOR symbolism, luminous BLUE was particularly important, but out of doors this color is particularly susceptible to environmental damage. In the symbolism of FREE-MASONRY, allegorical tapestries show three windows, each facing a different point of the compass (SOLOMON's temple in Jerusalem had no window facing north, because none of the sun's rays come from that direction); S. Prichard (1730) divulged that these windows were called "fixed lights," as

opposed to the "moveable" lights of the HEAVENS.

winds For the symbolist, winds are not merely currents of air but also supernatural manifestations of divine intentions. Two characteristics are of primary importance: the unpredictability of the wind, and its ability to produce dramatic effects despite its own invisibility. Where winds come from a characteristic direction (like the sirocco or the bora), they are easily personified, as in Greek antiquity. The bitter north wind Boreas abducts the Athenian princess Or-eithyia and carries her off to his home in Thrace; Zephyrus, the mild west wind, brings the young Psyche to Eros, the god of love; the south and east winds (Notos and Euros) were depicted less often. The four were usually shown winged; Boreas had SNAKES' bodies for feet.

In ancient China the wind (*feng*) was originally revered as a BIRD god, perhaps a primordial form of the PHOENIX. Here, too, the winds were distinguished and named according to the four points of the compass. *Feng-shui* is the science of "wind and water," the geomantic choice of locations for buildings on the basis of natural features of the landscape. *Feng* also has extended meanings: "caressing" and "odor." A fortune-teller is called a "MIRROR of the winds."

In ancient Iran, as in Islam, the wind was thought of as a great organizing principle for the cosmos. In ancient Egypt the cooling north wind came from the throat of the god Amon, and the name of the Sumerian god Enlil literally means "puff of wind." In the texts of Philo of Byblus (ca. A.D. 60–140), which are founded upon ancient Syrian beliefs, the "dark wind that mates with itself" hovers over the primordial chaos. In ancient Mexico the wind (*ehecatl*) was associated with the god Quetzalcóatl, who in this context wears a beak-like mask over his face.

The most impressive wind symbolism is found in the Bible. The Hebrew word *ruah* (feminine in gender) means "wind," "spirit," and "breath." At the beginning of the world, God's *ruah* "moved upon the face of the waters" [Genesis 1:2]. The divine revelation



Windows of the Temple, in Masonic tradition, face east, south and west.



Winds blowing from four corners of the earth. Ptolemy's Geography, Basel, 1545

to the prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb is evoked with great poetic majesty: "And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" [I Kings 19:11–13]. The frighteningly powerful manifestations of the force of the elements are merely God's harbingers; his own nature is expressed in the "still small voice." The Bible contains numerous passages of this sort; there is usually a clear distinction between God's breath and the stormy winds of destruction. Thus in the New Testament we find: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" [John 3:8]. God's *ruah* is similarly portrayed in Jewish legendary tradition: "There are two things which were not created: wind and water. They were there from the very beginning, when 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' God is one, and there is no other alongside him; so, too, is the wind. . . . You cannot grasp it, cannot strike it, burn it, cast it from you.

. . . The whole world is full of wind, the wind alone carries the world; it is the highest; it was at the beginning of everything" [bin Gorion, 1980]. The Greek word *pneuma*, similarly, can refer to the wind or to the Holy Spirit; when a baby is blown upon in the sacrament of baptism, this symbolizes the gift to ADAM of the breath of life. The "four winds" of the ancients, named for the four points of the compass, are held by four ANGELS in the Book of Revelation [7:1–3]. In Dürer's woodcut of the Apocalypse, the winds are symbolized by winged heads of angels, blowing.

Figures of speech involving the wind draw less upon the analogy with God's spirit than upon nautical associations, e.g., "to take the wind out of someone's sails."

wine As a traditional symbol, wine has rarely been associated with intoxication: usually diluted with water, it was a "spiritual drink," in the fullest sense of the word. The custom of intemperate drinking, in various cultures that revered Dionysus/BACCHUS, was part of a religious tradition and was believed to join mortals with the god of ecstasy. Wine supposedly could break any magic spell, unmask liars ("in vino veritas"), and slake the thirst even of the dead when it was poured out as a libation and allowed to seep into the ground. Called "the BLOOD of the grape," wine was often closely linked symbolically with blood, and not only in the Christian Eucharist. Poured out as a libation, it could replace blood sacrifices for the dead.



Wine: Grapes as a symbol of patient expectation. Hohberg, 1647

Grapes were first cultivated for wine long ago in the Middle East and Egypt (where the practice has been documented ca. 3000 B.C., when it was called *erpi*; dark grapes were called “EYES of Horus”). At festivals in this part of the world, wine was absolutely essential: note that Christ’s first miracle, in John’s gospel, was to turn water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana [2:1–11]. Christ’s statement to his disciples—“I am the vine, ye are the branches” [John 15:5]—was influential in medieval art. The cross and the tree of life were frequently represented as grapevines, and the Last Judgment as the harvesting of grapes for wine. The only negative portrayals of excessive drinking focus on Noah’s drunkenness, with his son Ham’s lack of respect interpreted by Christian thought as a typological anticipation of the arresting soldiers’ attitude toward Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the medieval collection *Gesta Romanorum* (ca. 1300) it is written that “Noah found the wild grape vine called *labrusca*—from *labra*, the borders of fields or paths. Finding the wine sour, he took the blood of four animals (a LION, a LAMB, a PIG, and an APE), mixed it with dirt and made a fertilizer from it which he spread around the roots of the *labrusca*. Thus the blood sweetened the wine. . . . The wine turned many who drank it into lions, they grew so angry; others lambs, they grew so modest; others apes, so curious and so raucous in their laughter.” The text makes no references to imbibers being turned into swine, but this presumably went without saying.

For Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) wine is of both medicinal and symbolic importance. She, too, begins with Noah: “Now the earth, which had been damaged by the blood of Abel [see CAIN], brought forth the new wine, and wisdom began anew.” Wine can have positive or negative effects, but its inner powers remain essentially mysterious. “We cannot see that secret vital force [*viriditas*, literally ‘greenness’] which gives life to the grape and the grain.” The same force is at work when the bread and wine of the Eucharist are transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ.

The Islamic attitude toward wine is ambiguous. According to legend, the archangel Gibreel (Gabriel), who led ADAM and his unnamed wife out of the GARDEN, took pity on them and gave them a grape tendril from the PARADISE from which they had been expelled. In another version, his staff, moistened by his tears of sympathy, bore fruit: grapes as round and soft as an angel’s tears. But Iblis, the DEVIL, put a curse on the plant; thus, even though wine was originally an angelic gift, it is no longer a blessing. All of the faithful are still forbidden to drink alcohol in this life; in heaven, however, the elect will drink “the wine that is sealed with musk and that so awakens the appetite that all will call out for it. And the wine will be mixed with water from the spring of Tasmin, from which all those close to Allah, all his friends, will drink.” A brook also flows through paradise with a “wine that delights the palate but does not intoxicate.”

A dream of wine, according to the analytic psychologist Aeppli, refers not to alcohol itself but to aspects of the individual spirit, the psyche. “The religious experience has elevated wine to represent the blood of the Lord. Wine is that which stimulates us, the power of the spirit to overcome the force of gravity and give wings to the imagination.

. . . When golden or dark red wine glows in the dreamer’s goblet, life is positive and meaningful. The miracle of wine, from the point of view of the soul, is a divine, life-giving one in which terrestrial, vegetative existence becomes spirit and takes wing.”



Wine: The drunken Silenus on a donkey. Cartari, 1675



Winged demon Pazuzu. Miniature Assyrian bronze, ca. 800 B.C.

The Japanese counterpart of wine is *sake*, referred to as “rice wine” but in fact more closely resembling beer, with a higher alcohol content (12–16 percent). It is consumed ritually at weddings and New Year’s; drunk from small red cups, it is also associated with the sealing of contracts.

wings Associated not only with Christian ANGELS but also with the fairies, spirits, and demons of ancient cultures. This partial assumption of BIRD-like form is an expression of their association with the HEAVENS, their FEATHERS lifting them above the human realm. What wings suggest symbolically is thus not the physical ability to fly but an “elevation” of, or improvement upon, the merely corporeal, subject as it is to the earth’s gravity. Thus the cherubim, the highest order of angels, are represented as most richly endowed with wings. In Ezekiel

1:4–25 they are described as having FOUR faces and four wings (*tetrapteryx*), standing on wheels covered with STARS like EYES: they form a living CHARIOT bearing God himself. In the Book of Revelation they are described as having six wings; in the illustrations of medieval books, the number varies. Classical personifications are also portrayed with wings, e.g., CHRONUS, the victory goddess Nike (Latin Victoria), and (fleeting) FORTUNA. In medieval art of the Eastern Church John the Baptist, Christ’s harbinger, is portrayed with wings; in Western Europe, the doctor *angelicus* Thomas Aquinas, and less often St. Vincent Ferrer, because of his angelic love for the rest of humanity. DEVILS are given not the light wings of a bird but the leathery ones of a BAT. In Romantic art fairies are often drawn with the wings of



Winged sun surrounding the god Assur as an archer. Assyrian, ca. 890 B.C.



Winged Egyptian sun symbol as adapted to represent the god Ahura Mazda

dragonflies and BUTTERFLIES. (See also ICARUS and CUPID.) In Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus*, the wing is said to have the power “to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downward into the upper region, which is the habitation of the gods”; it is also “the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine” [246d, translated by Jowett]. Mythical and symbolic animals are also endowed with wings as an expression of lightness or closeness to heavenly realms (PEGASUS). See also FEATHER. In heraldry wings designate the wish or accomplishment of “lifting oneself up through commendable deeds” [Böckler].



Wings: "One is not enough." J. Boschius, 1702

witches Their portrayal in myth, legend, fairy tale, and as symbolic figures, has little to do with the horrifying reality of the persecution of "witches" in Central Europe or Salem. Countless non-Western peoples have believed in witches and in the demonic powers of certain women whom they have characterized as cannibals, sorceresses, murderesses, and destroyers of male potency (e.g., by means of the *vagina dentata*). Such witches and related figures are symbols of a negative aspect of woman, her dark side, as feared by the—neurotic—male. In his rage he attacks them, combats them, determined to destroy them by fire if they have not been consumed in the ordeal by water (in the case of medieval Europe). Jungian psychology sees the figure of the witch as an imaginary embodiment of "the dark side of the

anima, the female aspect of man," represented for example by the **BLACK** goddess Kali in Hindu myth or the witch Rangda in the Indonesian theater. Such malformations are believed to result from a disturbed relationship to the **MOTHER** when the boy is growing up. Among the characteristic symbols of the fearful world of witches are nocturnal (see **NIGHT**) birds (e.g., owls), into which witches can transform themselves; **TOADS**, **SNAKES**, black **CATS**; then, alternatively, the witch's seductive beauty, or her repulsive ugliness; her **NAKEDNESS**, in rituals celebrated on solitary **MOUNTAINS** (e.g., the Brocken) with the **DEVIL** presiding, often in the form of a male **GOAT**. This image of the



Witches in Satan's embrace and flying on the back of a goat. Schaeufelein, ca. 1480



Witches as demons with animal heads. Molitoris, 1489

witch, familiar from European popular tradition, is only a particular instance of almost universal misogyny, however the manifestations of that fear may vary in detail. (In ancient Japan, for example, female demons transform themselves into **FOXES**; in the native culture of Siberia, into **WOLVES**.) The European persecution of "witches" bolstered this set of notions with pseudoscientific theory and translated it into murderous deeds. In recent years the figure of the witch has become a symbol of certain groups in the

women's movement, a sign of protest against the social dominance of the patriarchy.

wolf (Latin *lupus*) A predatory animal considered dangerous to people and animals, in Central European tradition and well into the modern era. It is hardly surprising that the wolf is prominent in FAIRY TALES as a menace to humans—an image of “the enemy” in animal form—or that there are legends of bloodthirsty humans turned into wolves (“werewolves,” literally “man-wolves”). In Old Norse mythology the mighty wolf Fenris must be tied up but then in the final battle (see END OF THE WORLD) breaks its bonds, swallows the sun, then is killed in combat by Odin, the father of all the gods, who himself dies in the process.

In classical antiquity the wolf was thought of as a “ghost animal” whose very gaze could strike people speechless. Herodotus and Pliny the Elder report that the members of the Scythian nation of the Neuroi were transformed into wolves once a year, then back into humans. Behind the story could lie a memory of a wolf totem for the entire nation; Genghis Khan also claimed to be descended from a blue-gray “chosen wolf” which itself was sired by the sky (Tenggri).

For the Romans, the appearance of a wolf before a battle could be an omen of victory, since the animal was associated with MARS, the god of war. The Spartans, on the other hand, feared defeat when wolves attacked



Wolf preaching to the sheep. Hohberg, 1647

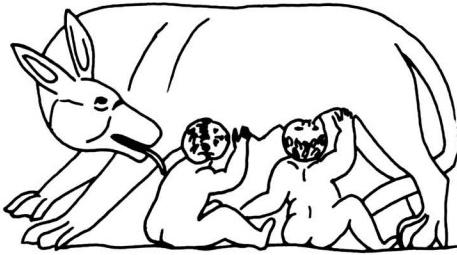
their flocks before the battle of Leuctra (371 b.c.). Although the wolf (because it sees in the dark) can symbolize the morning sun (Apollo Lycius), its associations are predominantly negative ones: it stands for nature in the wild or for the forces of Satan. In ancient China, too, it stood for greed and cruelty; a “wolf gaze” is one of distrust and fear, such as a person might feel toward a predatory animal traveling in packs. Only on the Turkish steppe did the wolf function as a national totem, appearing on banners and flags.

There are, nevertheless, legends (in the Ordos region of northern China, for example) in which wolves nurse and raise children. The frightening predator can under some circumstances become the powerful guardian of helpless creatures, although the fear of “the big bad wolf” ultimately seems to prevail in most traditions. In Christian iconography the wolf is primarily the diabolical enemy that threatens the flock of the faithful (see LAMB). Only saints—e.g., Francis of Assisi, William of Vercelli (who saddled a wolf), Hervé, and Philibert of Jumièges—have the power to transform the wolf’s savagery into “piety.” St. Simpert of Augsburg is said to have rescued a child from the jaws of a wolf and forced the animal to return it to its mother. (The depiction of Sts. Wolfgang and Lupus in the company of wolves is simply a play on their names.) The “jaws of hell” themselves are sometimes depicted as those of a DRAGON, sometimes those of a powerful wolf.

In the early Christian text *Physiologus*, the wolf is described as a “a crafty, wicked



Wolf (werewolf) attacking. Woodcut, H. Weiditz, 1517



Wolf, Romulus, Remus. Relief, Avenches, Switzerland, 2nd century after Christ

animal," pretending to be lame when it encounters a human, so as to be able to attack. "St. Basil said: This is what crafty, treacherous people are like. When they encounter good people, they pretend to be utterly innocent and harmless, but their hearts are full of bitterness and deceit." The "wolf in SHEEP's clothing" serves as a symbol of the seductive false prophet, whose goal is to "corrupt the innocent."

English idioms preserve the image of the wolf as ravenous, a menace, a predator. "To keep the wolf from the door" is to earn sufficient money to avert starvation; "to cry wolf" is to raise a false alarm; and a human "wolf" (distinguished not by his howl but by his "whistle") is a man who relentlessly pursues large numbers of women for sexual gratification.

In the imagery of ALCHEMY the *lupus metallorum* (the "wolf of metals") is said to devour the "LION" (i.e., GOLD), in order to "redeem" it. This appears to be a purification process for contaminated gold, using antimony, the "gray wolf" of the alchemist's laboratory.



Wolf emblematic of human tendency to emulate one's elders. Hohberg, 1675



Wolf. Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, Frankfurt, 1531

The frequent portrayal of WITCHES riding on or being transformed into wolves, goes back to an association of wolves with the DEVIL.

The wolf symbolizes cunning and treachery in the fables of the wolf preaching to the sheep and "The Wolf and the CRANE." (The crane extracts a bone that has been caught in the wolf's throat, but the bird's only reward is that the wolf does not bite its head off: "such are the ungrateful rich, who live from the toil of the poor.")

Although many years of Freudian psychoanalysis were unable to free the "Wolf Man" entirely from his obsessions, Jungians hold out hope for those so afflicted. They understand the wolf (as a dream symbol) as prowling the landscape of the psyche, representing untamed external energies, "intelligent" and uncompromising. The dreamer is called upon to channel this onslaught, which entails the resolution of great conflicts. Jungians are quick to point out, however, that in fairy tales this "rapacious" predator is outsmarted by the wise child and the young goat and can certainly be no match for the mature hunter.

Incidentally, modern animal behaviorists have established that the wolf does not altogether deserve its bad reputation. With behavior modification through positive reinforcement it can be trained to co-exist with a human who adopts the manner of the "alpha wolf" (the leader of the pack).

As early as 1688 Böckler offered the following positive view of the animal: "The wolf represents alert caution, which explains the frequent appearance of its name and image in coats of arms. The wolf pursues his

spoils so shrewdly that the hunter can rarely catch him on the prowl."

In the medieval bestiaries, on the other hand, the wolf is an utterly diabolical creature. The EYES of the female are said to shine at night like lanterns to bedazzle the senses of humans, just as the DEVIL takes away our ability to cry out (i.e., to pray) and his gaze is bright. His works bedazzle the fool, who is blind to their ugliness and the damnation that they bring [Unterkircher].

Presumably legendary accounts of "wolf children" (i.e., abandoned children raised by wolves) are found not only in India (see Kipling's *Jungle Book*) but also in European folklore, perhaps inspired by the Roman legend of the Capitoline wolf that was said to have nursed Romulus and Remus.

work An everyday concept that has particular symbolic significance in the intellectual world and linguistic usage of FREEMASONRY. It refers to the work of the Lodge on the great project of building the "TEMPLE of all-embracing human love" or "of humanity," after the Master has lit the candle on the "PILLAR of Wisdom" and spoken the words "May wisdom guide the construction"; the first and second attendant light additional candles and say: "May strength carry it out," and "May beauty complete it." This lodge- or temple-work on an ideal structure brings spiritual blessings: "It is a religious mystery leading to spiritual fraternity. Its observance frees and elevates the participant as art does the artist: serving the God within us and thus, indirectly, the deification of the world" [Horneffer].

wreath or garland (Greek *stephanus*, Latin *corona*) A ring of flowers and leaves, related to the CROWN, but less permanent and usually indicating not monarchy but rather temporary honors. Wreaths, of course, need not be worn on the head: they are presented as tributes—in the form of a CIRCLE symbolizing permanence—at funerals and on other solemn occasions. For the ancient world they combined the image of the RING with that of vitality of living plants. Wreaths



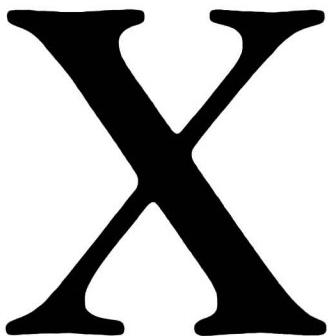
Wreath rewards "victory with peace." J. Boschius, 1702

and garlands crowned victorious generals, winners of athletic contests, but also, for example, sacrificial animals. In Christian symbology the wreath often symbolizes the defeat of darkness and sin, for example the bridal wreath (see VIRGIN), often in the form of a small crown, or the garlands worn by girls receiving their First Communion in the Catholic Church. In the Bible it is written that "the Lord of hosts (shall) be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people" [Isaiah 28:5]. Garlands are often associated with the pleasures of this world and riotous living: for example, it was believed in ancient times that a garland of ivy could protect its wearer from becoming intoxicated. In modern times sanctuaries are often decorated for church holidays with wreaths of twigs and flowers, symbolizing joy, eternal life, and the Resurrection. Christ's crown of THORNS is to be understood as a parody of the ROSE garlands of Roman emperors; crowns similar to Christ's became the attributes of such saints as Mary Magdalene, Veronica, and Catherine of Siena, and crowns of roses adorn St. Cecilia and St. Flavia. Literal crowns are often representations in metal of wreaths, and there are cases where the symbolic traditions of the wreath and the crown overlap. In Latin, French, and English there is one word that, depending on context, can refer to

either (*corona*, *couronne*, and “crown” itself). LAUREL wreaths were associated with Apollo; olive wreaths (or, at the Nemean Games, parsley wreaths), with Zeus; wreaths containing ears of grain, with Demeter (Latin

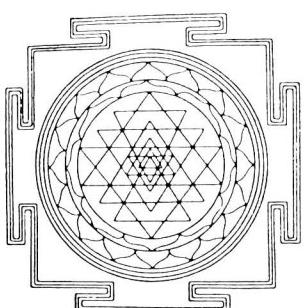
Ceres); wreaths of pine-needles and -cones, with Poseidon; fennel wreaths, with Sabazius, the Phrygian god of agriculture. Wreaths of OAK leaves adorned those who had saved the lives of others.

Xanthippe (literally, “yellow horse”) The wife of the philosopher Socrates (470–399 B.C.), who must have already been advanced in age when they married: when he drank hemlock and died at the age of 70, the three children that he left behind were not yet of age. The Cynics, e.g., Xenophon in his *Symposium*, portrayed Xanthippe as particularly quarrelsome. Modern commentators, however, have pointed out that the philosopher’s own way of life may have given her just cause for complaint. The same perspective is offered by the Central European saying: “Xanthippes are made, not born.” Still, however just her claims for our compassion may have been, her name has become a proverbial epithet (as in “a real Xanthippe”) for any nagging, shrewish wife.



Y

yantra A graphic aid to meditation, going back to ancient India and still esteemed in the modern era, consisting of geometrically balanced signs, organized symmetrically around a single center (see MANDALA). A yantra is usually constructed from successively inscribed TRIANGLES, SQUARES, and CIRCLES, which are significant to those who are aware of certain conventions but can also communicate directly with the unconscious through archetypal structures of the psyche. The best known is the “Shri” yantra, consisting primarily of artfully arranged triangles, some pointing up and some down in reference to a philosophical DUALITY; they are encircled by rings of LOTUS leaves within an extended quadratic structure. This yantra is believed to facilitate meditation upon the unity that transcends the polarity of opposites and thus to lead to a feeling of



Yantra: Shri yantra, made up of triangles, circles and border

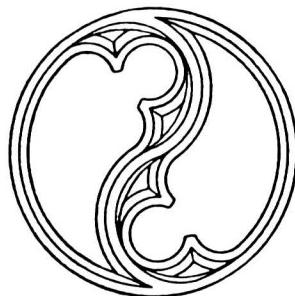
personal empowerment in the face of temporary conflicts.

yellow In ancient Chinese symbology, yellow was the COLOR of loess and thus symbolized the center and the earth. The color, of GOLD is often said to be “yellow,” and gods are often portrayed with golden yellow skin. In Goethe’s theory of colors, yellow is said to be “a soft and merry color, but one that is not far from being displeasing; the slightest intermingling of another color degrades it, makes it unpleasant, dirty.” Only the addition of a small quantity of RED does he tolerate, judging the effect to be “warming.” In Central Europe bright yellow was popularly thought to symbolize envy and jealousy (the English “green with envy” being replaced by “yellow with envy”), probably through association with “yellow bile” (*Greek chole*), which in the ancient theory of the four humors (see ELEMENTS) was believed to produce the “choleric” disposition. But yellow is referred to more frequently as the color of the SUN, and as such, according to Aeppli, its nature is ambiguous: it is “the color of easily triggered intuition and suspicion, in which there is a peculiar solar power, penetrating and illuminating.” Golden yellow, with a touch of red, usually symbolizes the glow of wisdom; pale yellow, treacherous aggression (as in portrayals of the clothing of JUDAS). This is why in the Middle Ages Jews were forced to wear yellow and, in Nazi Germany, the yellow STAR of David. In the cosmology of the Maya yellow was associated with the direction south; in the color symbolism of ALCHEMY, a yellow coloration (*citrinitas*) indicates a transitional step (between “blackening” and “reddening”) in the progress of matter toward becoming the philosopher’s STONE.

yew (*Taxus*) An evergreen tree that can live for centuries and was thus a classical symbol of immortality. From time immemorial it has been planted at cemeteries, along with other evergreens and long-lived trees and shrubs, presumably to express the hope for a life that extends beyond the death of the body. By ancient times it was known

that the seeds of the yew are poisonous (they contain an alkaloid that can paralyze the heart), and the feared Celtic warriors dipped the tips of their spears in yew poison. The pulpy exterior of the seed, however, is not poisonous; birds eat yew berries and thereby help to propagate the tree. The wood of the tree is resin-free and utterly impervious; it was thus used for making statues and bows. Even in modern times children in southeastern Europe have been given yew crosses as amulets against evil forces.

yin and yang (Japanese *in* and *yo*) The ancient Chinese representation of cosmic DUALITY. Yin symbolizes femininity, the north, cold, SHADOW, EARTH, the passive, and dampness; yang, masculinity, the south, warmth, LIGHT, the HEAVENS, the active, dryness—and the EMPEROR. Although in the everyday life of ancient China the male was clearly dominant, the language did not reflect this by placing “yang” before “yin,” as one might expect. Masculine dominance is, however, reflected in the predominantly negative associations of yin. In theory, the two principles are thought to be of equal rank. Their visual representation is based on a CIRCLE, the symbol of the primal unity (*tai-chi*) that preceded the polarity of yin and yang; this unity is a philosophical concept going back to Chu-Hsi (A.D. 1130–1200). The division into two poles is represented by the bisecting of the circle with an S-curve; the yin half is dark, the yang half light. From this polarity comes the creation of the five ELEMENTS, and from their interaction the multifaceted richness of the world (the “ten thousand things”).



Yin and yang suggested by Gothic window design



Yin and yang, surrounded by eight trigrams (see I CHING): symbol of cosmic unity

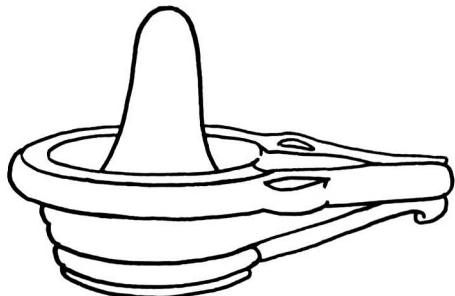
The mutual dependence of yin and yang is expressed by a dark (circular) center in the yang sector and a light one in the yin. This is to make it clear that light and shadow are not in conflict for domination of the whole; they strive rather for completion in one another. In the diagrams of the I CHING yin is expressed by a broken, yang by a continuous, line. Odd numbers are associated with yang; even, with yin.

In ancient CAVE temples there were yin and yang STONES. The former needed to be kept moist, the latter dry. When rainfall was excessive, the yang stone (or in times of drought or heat the yin stone) was whipped to awaken its powers, to restore the proper harmonic balance between the two principles.

yoke A word derived from the Indo-European root *yug*, “joining, arranging”; it is thus a cognate of the word “yoga.” When used in a positive sense, “yoke” refers to a selfless willingness to give up autonomy, to devote oneself to a goal that demands great self-abnegation. In a negative sense, the word connotes the burden of forced labor which reduces humans to the level of OXEN. Bending one’s head under the yoke is also used as a symbol of humiliation, for example by the Samnites when they had defeated the Romans in 321 B.C. and forced the Roman army to march past under the “Caudine yoke” (near the city of Caudium on the Appian Way). In the Bible it is said that God will “put a yoke of iron” on the neck of the disobedient [Deuteronomy 28:48];

the prophet Jeremiah puts “bonds and yokes” on his neck as a sign of his submission to the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar of BABYLON, until the time has come for the oppressor’s downfall. We often speak figuratively of “the yoke of slavery,” “the yoke of marriage,” of husband and wife being “yoked together,” of “throwing off the yoke of oppression.” References to “the yoke of marriage” are not necessarily meant pejoratively: they may go back to a Latin word for marriage, *conjugium*, literally “being yoked together, union,” from which our word “conjugal” is derived.

yoni Sanskrit term for the womb, associated with the vulva in Indian symbology. Portrayals of the yoni in isolation (a TRIANGLE pointing downward, representing the pubic triangle) are relatively rare. In the cult of Shiva it usually appears in STONE sculptures as a ring or series of rings at the base of the LINGA (the traditional phallic symbol, usually in the form of a truncated



Yoni and linga combined in stylized form. Indian ritual object

PILLAR). The yoni and the linga constitute a fundamental DUALITY, the feminine and masculine principles without whose combination the creation of the world would have been unthinkable.

The combination of the kundalini SNAKE (the symbol of vital energy) with a representation of the yoni stands for the awareness of greater interconnectedness that arises out of matter.

Zacharius See EVANGELISTS, SYMBOLS OF THE.

Zagreus See ORPHEUS.

Zephyrus In Greek mythology, the west wind. See FLORA, HYACINTH, TIGER, WINDS.

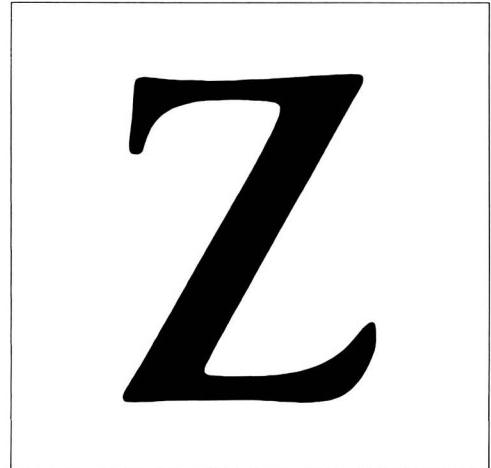
Zeus In Greek mythology, son of Cronus and father of the gods. See ANDROGYNE, APPLE, BEAR, EGG, LIGHTNING, NEMESIS, ORPHEUS, PROMETHEUS, STONE, SWAN, TREE.

zinc See VITRIOL.

Zion, Mount See JERUSALEM, MOUNTAIN.

Zion, Star of See HEXAGRAM, STAR, TRIANGLE.

Ziusudra In the epic *Gilgamesh*, the name of the survivor of the GREAT FLOOD. See also ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED.



zodiac An imaginary belt that divides the heavens into twelve constellations, each constellation represented by a symbol. See ASTROLOGICAL SYMBOLS, NUMBERS, PRECIOUS AND SEMIPRECIOUS STONES, STARS.

Zohar, Book of See LIGHT.

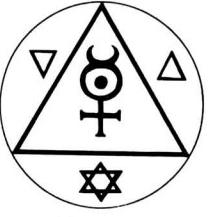
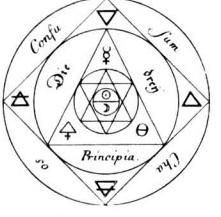
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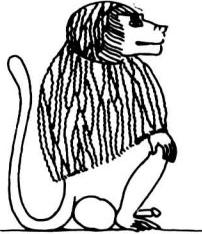
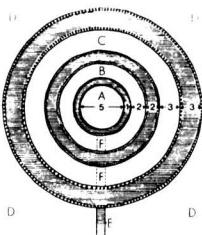
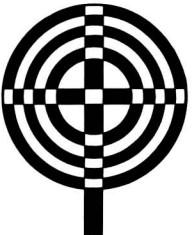
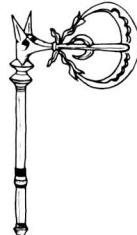
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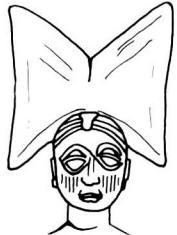
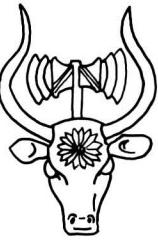
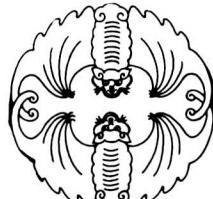
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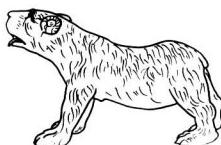
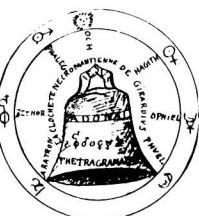
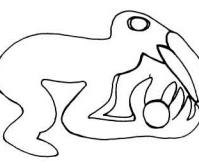
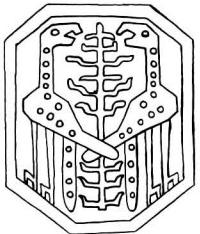
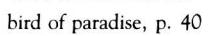
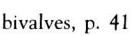
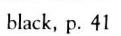
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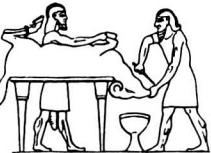
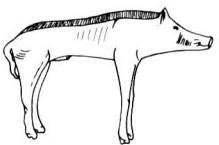
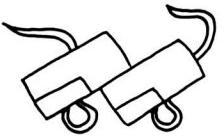
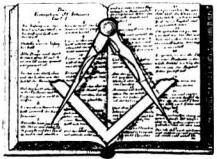
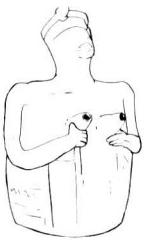
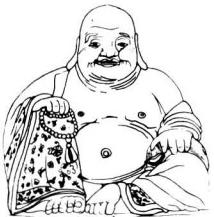
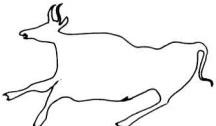
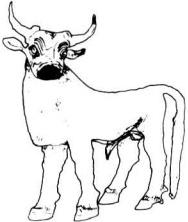
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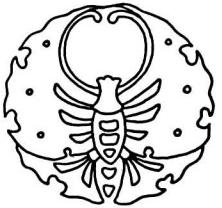
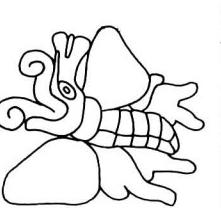
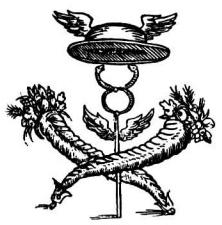
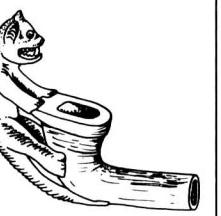
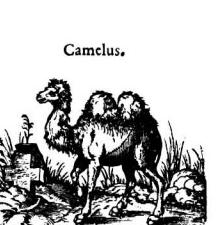
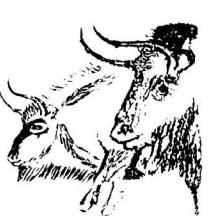
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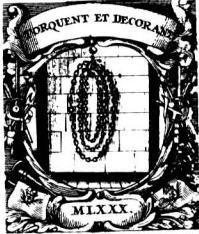
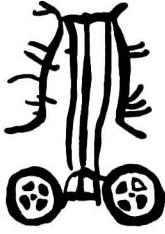
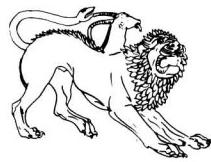
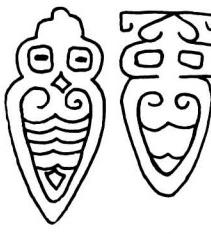
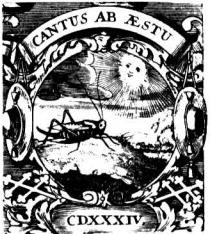
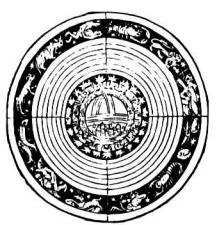
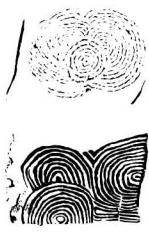
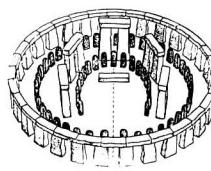
			
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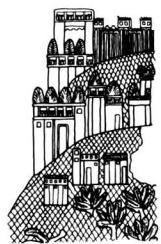
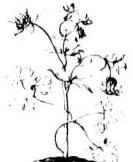
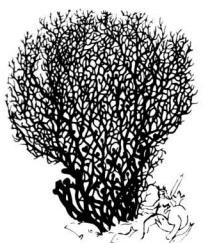
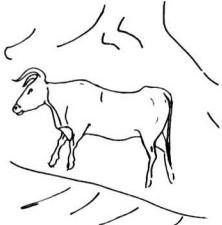
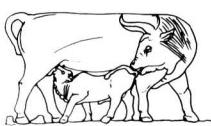
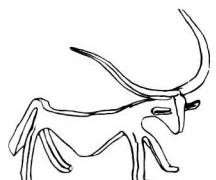
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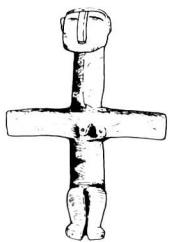
			
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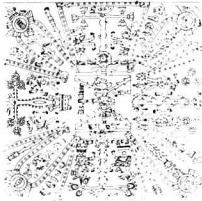
			
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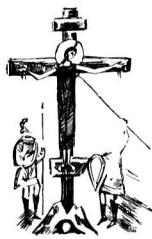
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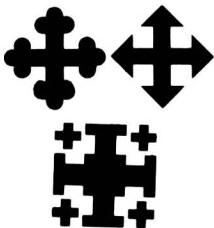
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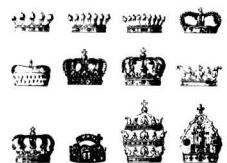
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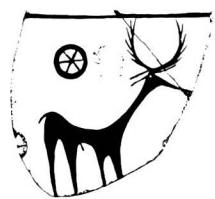
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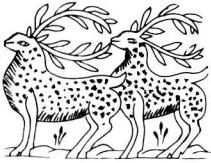
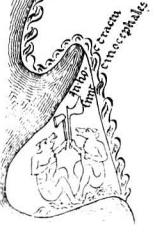
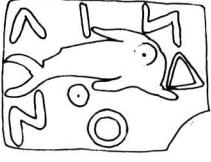
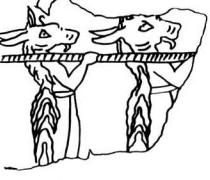
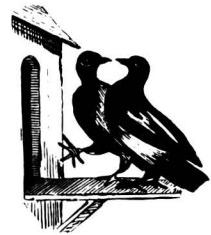
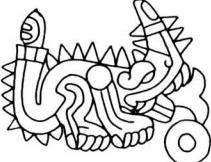
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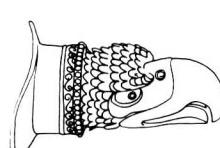
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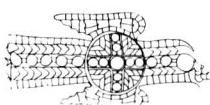
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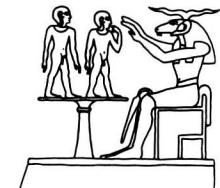
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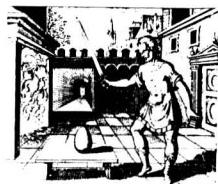
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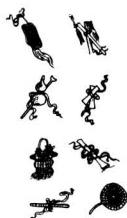
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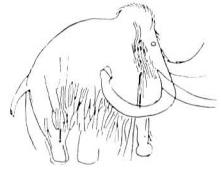
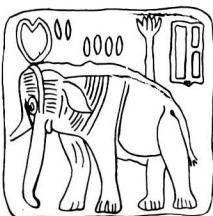
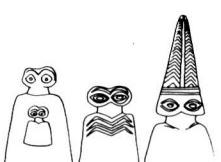
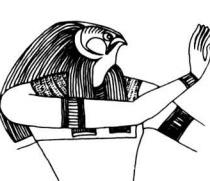
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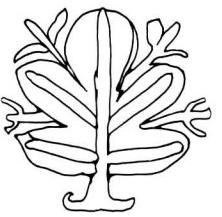
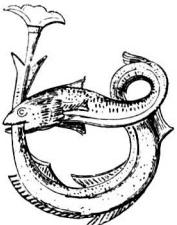
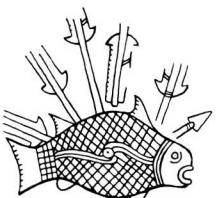
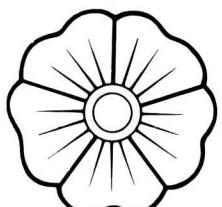
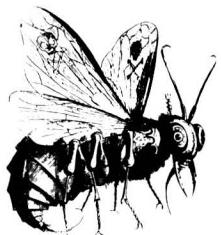


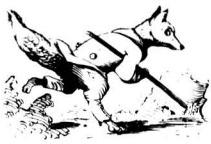
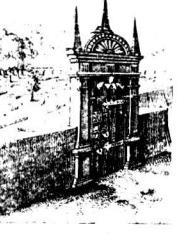
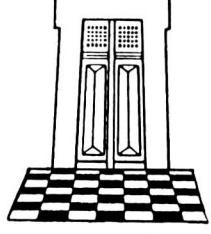
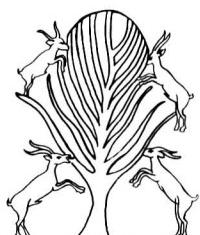
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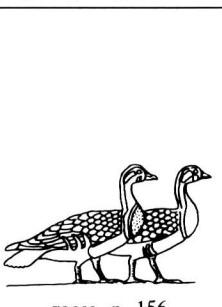
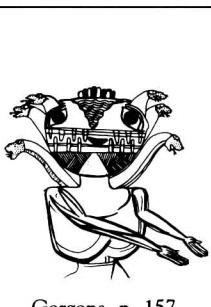
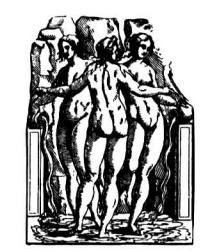
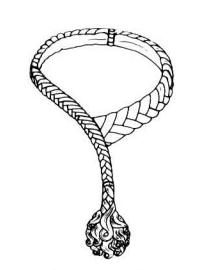
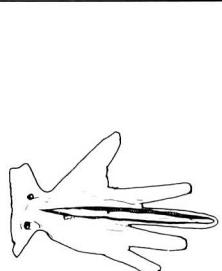
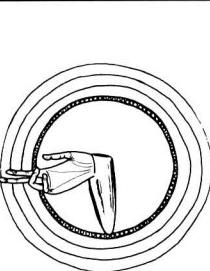
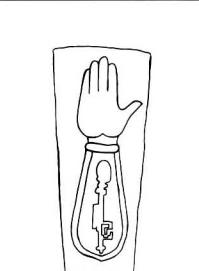
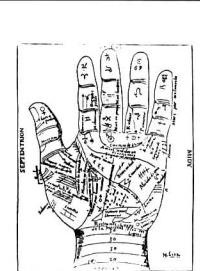


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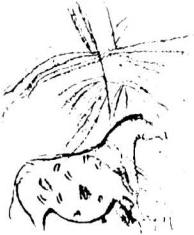
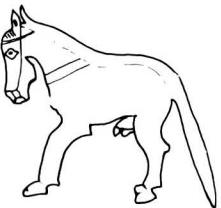
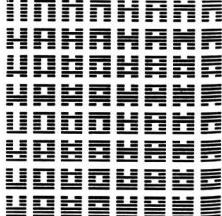
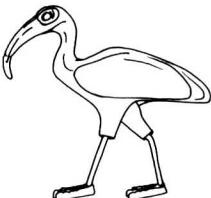
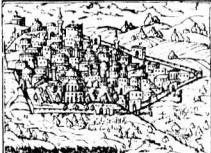
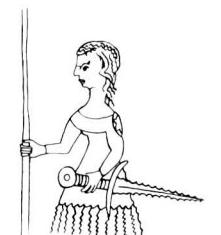
			
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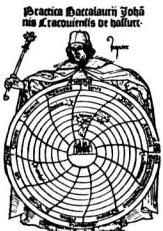
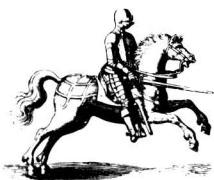
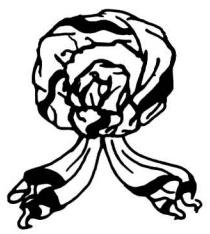
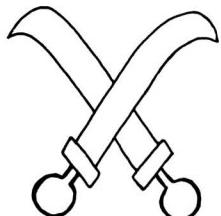
			
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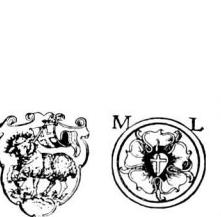
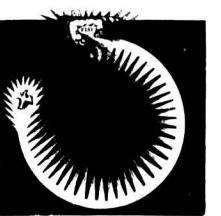
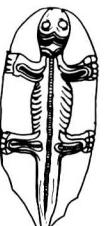
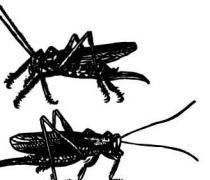
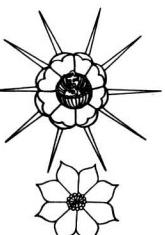
			
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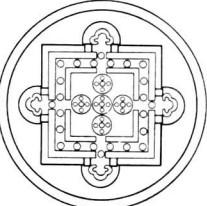
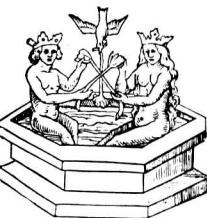
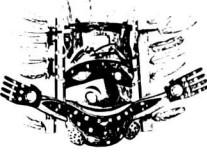
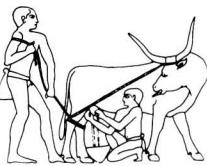
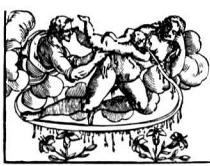
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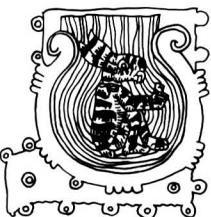
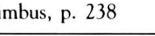
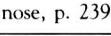
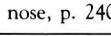
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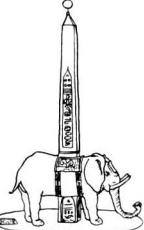
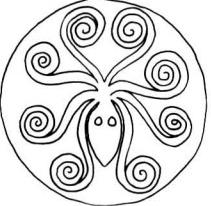
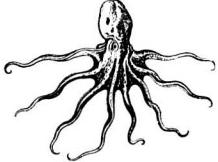
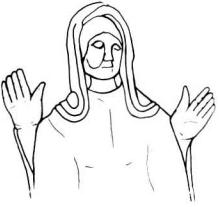
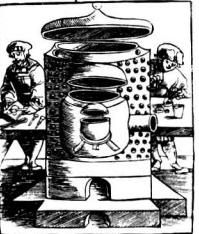
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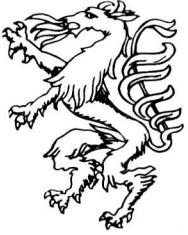
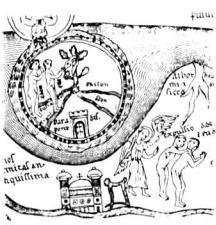
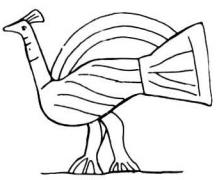
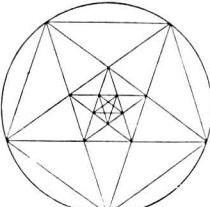
			
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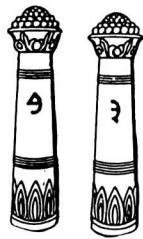
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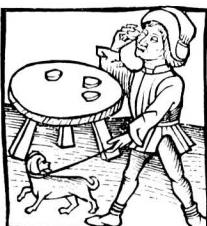
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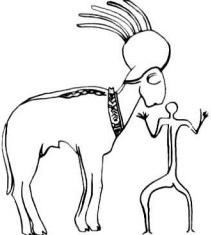
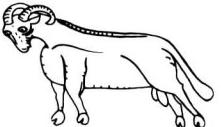
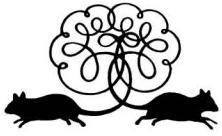
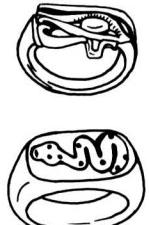
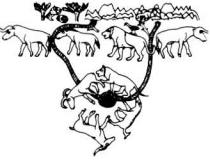
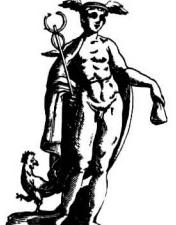
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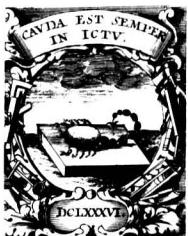
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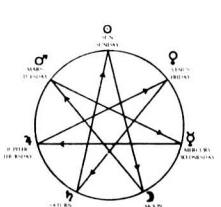
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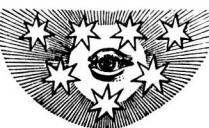
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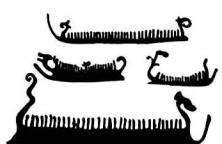
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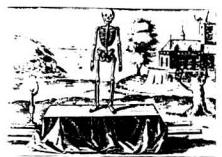
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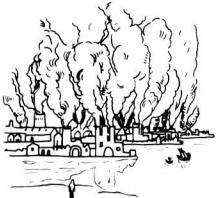
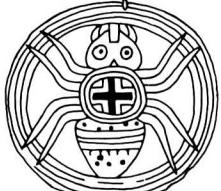
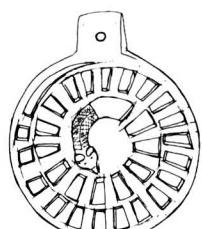
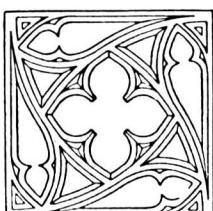
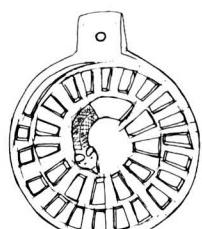
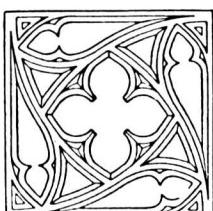
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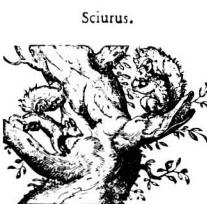
			
			
			
			
			
			



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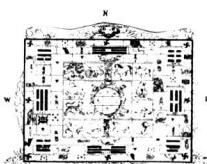
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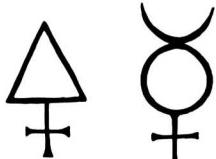
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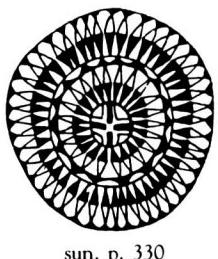
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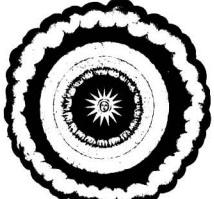
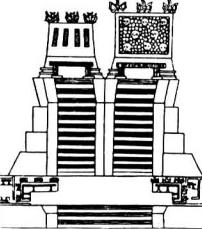
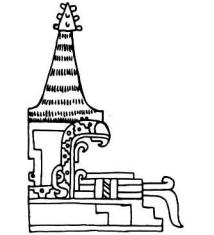
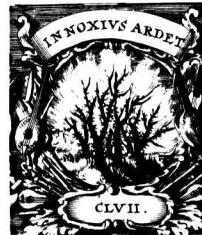
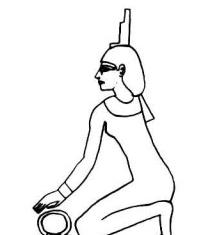
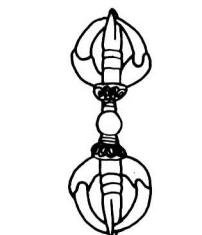
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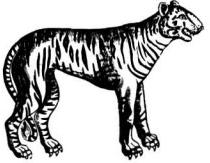
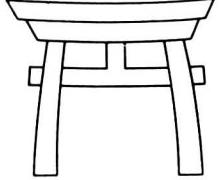
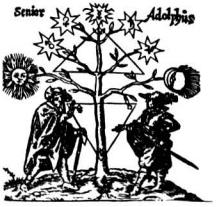
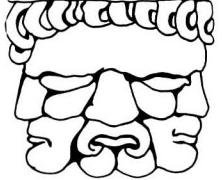
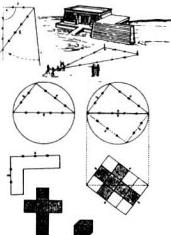
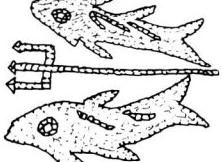


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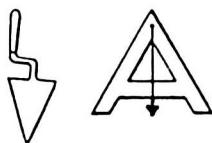
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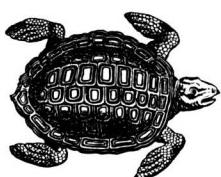
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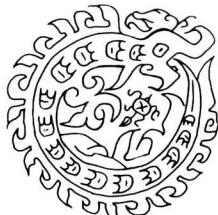
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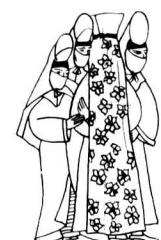
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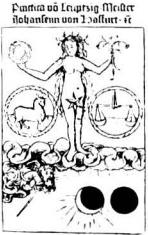
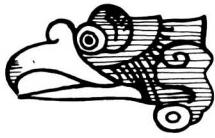
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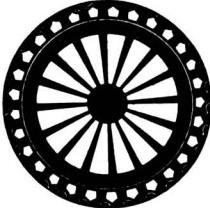
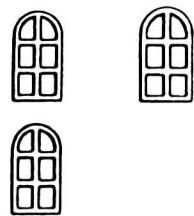


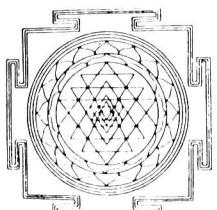
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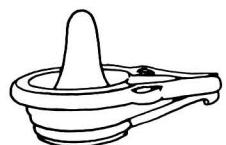
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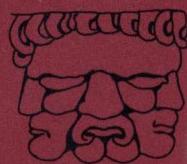
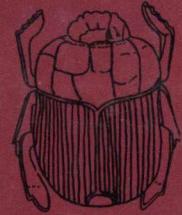
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